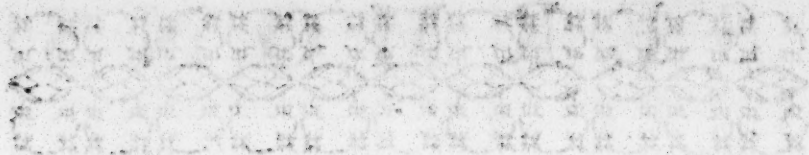


S E R M O N S
O N
Practical Christianity.

By HENRY STEBBING, D.D.
Archdeacon of Wilts, Chancellor of the Diocese
of Sarum, and late Preacher to the Honourable
Society of Gray's-Inn.



L O N D O N:
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MDCCLIX,



To the President of the

Master of the Bench

of the

Honorable Society

CRAYFORD

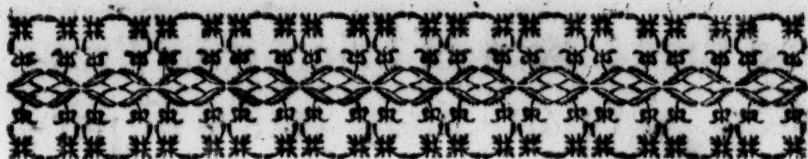
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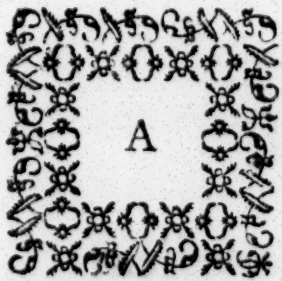
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To the WORSHIPFUL the
MASTERS of the BENCH
OF THE
HONOURABLE SOCIETY
OF
GRAY'S-INN.

GENTLEMEN,

S these Sermons were
composed for your
Chapel, and there
preached; you have
the best Right to my Addresses now
they are made public: And I will-
ingly embrace the Opportunity, to
acknowledge the many Obligations
I received from the Society whilst I
had

DEDICATION.

had the Honour of being your Preacher. In particular, you will permit me to return you my Thanks, for the last and greatest Instance of your Friendship; your Acceptance of my Son as my Successor in the Place, when the Infirmities of Age began to make the Burthen of it too heavy for me. It is my great Comfort that he meets with your Approbation; and I doubt not but that he will continue to deserve it.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient

humble Servant,

HENRY STEBBING.

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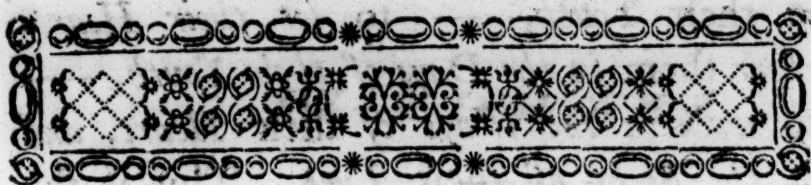
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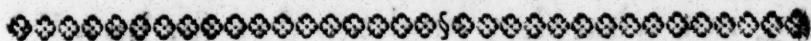
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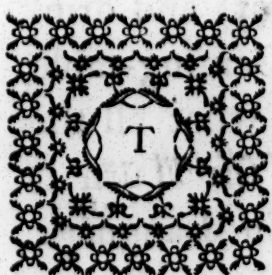


S E R M O N I.



ECCLESIASTES xi. 9. *Ps.*

*Rejoice, O young Man in thy Youth; and
let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of
thy Youth; and walk in the Ways of thine
Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes:
But know thou, that for all these Things,
God will bring thee to Judgment.*



THESE Words contain an Exhortation to Virtue founded upon the most weighty Reason that can be offered to the Consideration of Man, the Certainty of a future Judgment. The Reason affects all Men alike; but it is here particularly urged to young Persons, who are generally most apt to disregard it. This is what the wise Man intends to suggest, when he bids them to *rejoice*

B

in

in their Youth,-----to let their Hearts cheer them in the Days of their Youth,-----to walk in the Ways of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes. This is the Description of a Mind addicted to Pleasure; and it intimates to us plainly enough, what it is customary for young Men to do, not what they ought to do; for he tells them that *for all these Things God will bring them to Judgment*; and it is but a cold Way of encouraging Men to rejoice, to tell them that their Joy will end in Sorrow. The Text therefore must be understood as a Rebuke or Reprimand, so much the more severe as it hath the Appearance of Permission and Indulgence. “Go young Man! Follow your vain
 “and foolish Inclinations, eat and drink
 “and play. Run to the Gaming-table,
 “and to the Stews; and see what all this
 “will come to.” This is the Turn of the Sentence, which in plain Language, is saying that it is a mad, as well as a wicked Thing, in young Men to give themselves up to vicious Pleasures; because they stand accountable to God, who will one Day bring them to a sad Reckoning.

This

This Consideration, that there is a Day of reckoning to come, and that if Sin meets not its due Reward in this Life, we must pay severely for it in the next, it is necessary we should all of us carry about us, to serve as a Check to restrain us from doing bad Things. But to Youth it is more particularly so, who from the Warmth of their Passions, lie more open and exposed to Temptations. And where the greatest Danger threatens, the strongest Guard is always necessary. The Inconveniencies, and Mischiefs attending bad Courses in this Life, have generally very little Weight with them: For though they observe that some Men are ruined by their Vices, they see, or fancy they see, that a great many are not; and when Inclination leads the Way, Presumption always runs strong on the agreeable Side. The first Openings to Vice are generally smooth and inviting. The rugged Ways lie at a Distance, and less exposed to View; and as Men become more experienced in Wickedness, they are more crafty and dexterous to guard against Consequences: Which some do with that Success, that if there was no Account to be given hereafter, we might reckon them,

perhaps, to have been no ill Managers. But if they are firmly possessed of the Belief of a God, and a future Judgment, this lays a stumbling Block at the very Door; and gives them a Prospect of Miseries, which they have no Chance to escape, otherwise than by Repentance. For what Secresy can hide us from the all-seeing Eye of God? What Art, what Management, skreen us from his Wrath, when our Trial is over, and we are to receive the due Reward of our Deeds?

The first Instruction from hence, should be to those who have the Education of Youth; Parents and Masters of Families; whose chief Care it should be to possess their Minds early, with strong Impressions of Religion. And this it will be no difficult Matter to do, because these Notions so naturally fall in with every Thing that they see and observe about them. It will not be hard to convince a Child that the Heavens and the Earth are the Workmanship of God, when he sees that every Effect must have its proper Cause, and knows no Work of Art, which is not the Production of Wisdom. Atheism is never the Result of our first and most simple Conceptions

S E R M O N I.

5

Conceptions of Things; but of Labour, and Thought, and learned Folly; when the Corruptions of the Heart have forced the Understanding from its natural Notions into perverse, unnatural Ways of thinking. Leave your Child to the Sense he is born with, and he will no more doubt, when you tell him that God made the World, than if you should tell him that the Watch-maker made your Watch, or that the Carpenter built your House; and when he believes that God made the World, it will be as natural to him to think that he governs it too, and that he will punish bad Men; for he sees this in every kind of Government that he knows any thing of. Parents punish disobedient Children; Masters idle and disorderly Servants; and publick Justice lays hold of publick Offenders. These natural Sentiments will be much heightened and confirmed by what they are taught in the Holy Scripture, concerning the Punishment which God hath reserved for Sinners in another World, which is set forth to us by the Images of Things most hideous and dreadful to human Nature. *Outer Darknes where shall be weeping and gnash-*

ing of Teeth! A Lake of everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels! What these Things precisely mean we cannot tell; and God grant that we may none of us ever experience! But something undoubtedly they mean, which is severe and terrible; and we cannot raise our Notions of them too high, for the greater we apprehend the Punishment of Sin to be, the more careful we shall be not to offend.

It is for this End that God hath revealed them; and it is to be hoped that no Christian Parents will neglect to infuse into the Minds of their Children an early Sense of the Christian Doctrine in these Points; which the deeper Root it takes, the surer Foundation it will lay for a right Conduct afterwards. We should think it a Neglect not to be excused, if we should turn our Children loose into the World uninstructed in those Arts of civil Life, which are necessary to enable them to provide a Maintenance for the Body. It is not less unreasonable, though it is a Thing a great deal more common, to neglect their precious and immortal Part the Soul, as if, provided we can but make them rich and
great

great in this World, it were of no Consequence what is to become of them in the next.-----But as the Advice in the Text is directed to young Persons, to them I shall now particularly apply myself; and the Thing that they should take Notice of is, that how well instructed soever they may set out in the Belief of a future Judgment, by the Care of their Parents, it may very easily be lost, if they suffer themselves to be entangled in the Vices of the World. It is hard to stand the constant Reproaches of ones own Mind; and to bear those dismal Fore-bodings of Wrath and Vengeance to come, which will haunt and torment us, whilst together with the Consciouſness of our own Guilt, we retain a firm Belief, that God will punish us everlastingly. What then will be left for us, when we find not within ourselves Virtue enough to repent, but to rid ourselves of this troublesome Principle, and to flatter ourselves into the Belief, that when this Life shall be at an End, there is nothing beyond it, or nothing that can hurt us? How pleasing would have been the Voice to Sinners if it had been said, *Rejoice O young Man in thy*

Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth; and walk in the Ways of thine Heart and in the Sight of thine Eyes.-----For thou shalt die like the Beast that perisheth! Bad Men I think cannot hope to be happy in a future State. It is too much to suppose that God will reward them for their Vices. The utmost they can hope for is, *not to be*; and even this would be something, if there was any Foundation in Reason to support it. But how little Countenance soever this Notion has from Reason, there is that in it which courts Flesh and Blood, as it takes off that dead Weight which so miserably clogs and hampers us in our Pursuits after sensual Enjoyments, and leaves us at full Liberty to act as we please. Our first and most natural Conceptions, (as I have said) run strongly for the Belief of future Punishments for Sinners; and although we have not our Judgment at will, as we have our Hand or our Foot, to turn it this Way or that Way as we think fit; yet it is very certain that the self same Thing may appear to us in different Lights, as the Mind is differently disposed. The Scripture speaks of those on whom God would *send strong*

strong Delusion that they should believe a Lie. It is not impossible that we may bring this Delusion upon ourselves. When Opinions have their Foundation in Truth, after Reflections strengthen and confirm the first Judgment; but they may spoil it too, if we take not Prudence and Virtue for our Guides. For when the Mind is under the Influence of strong Passions, and unreasonable Prejudices, it grows unfaithful to itself, and like a distempered Eye sees every Thing wrong. We find by daily Experience, how easily we fall into inconsistent Determinations, as the Judgment is either left free to its own natural Workings, or is swayed by selfish and partial Considerations. Apply to a Man of Sense and Honesty in a Matter of Property, and he will see and do what is right. But if his Heart is corrupted by Covetousness, it will confound his Judgment, and Right will be one Thing in his Neighbour's Cause, another in his own. The Cases are alike: For every bad Man has an Interest at stake that there should be no future Reckoning; and weak as those Pretences may be which may be alledged in Support of such a Belief, they will too easily pass with those

those who are afore-hand prepared to receive them.

Various are the Arts of Self-deceit by which Sinners endeavour to soften the Sense of Guilt, and to keep a future Judgment out of their Sight. In the first Place they will be very apt to plead the Privileges of Youth, which they are wont to consider as a Season that has a Right to some Indulgence. If by Indulgence be meant Indulgence in the innocent Pleasures of Life, the Plea may be admitted. Pleasures may be innocent in their Kind, but faulty in the Degree; not beyond Honesty, but beyond Prudence. Excesses of this Sort we are wont to excuse in young Persons, as they have but little Experience of Things, and are more easily caught with Novelties. But Actions directly criminal, if they are less criminal in young Persons than in old ones as they are liable to stronger Temptations, still make them accountable to God, from whose Laws they cannot be exempted any more than old ones are. But how long is this Indulgence to last? Forever? No. Only for a Time; *in the Days of our Youth*, the Period of which we shall never be able to settle to ourselves; for we shall
always

always be apt to think ourselves young so long as we feel the Appetite to Sin. This Plea however does not discard the Notion of a future Judgment, but admits it: For those who say, it is too soon to be virtuous, must be understood to mean that they will amend their Conduct when the proper Time for it is come. Should I tell such as these that, young as they are, their Breath is in the Hand of God, who can shorten their Race, and cut them down whilst they are yet green and flourishing; it would be offering a most weighty Consideration against such kind of Presumptions. But the Thing I would remind them of at present is, that this is but preparing the Way to the last fatal Step. For what if as they grow in Years, they should also grow in Wickedness, and see Reasons for the Reformation of their Lives, without finding in themselves the Heart to set about it? This is the great Danger! Here is the Point where their Faith will begin to stagger; and when they are ashamed any longer to plead the Privileges of Youth (which is indeed taxing themselves with Folly) corrupted Reason will now collect all her Forces and try to bear them out.

As

As for Instance---Perhaps they will try to make void the Law; and confound the Distinction of Virtue and Vice. “ When
“ we Sin (say they) what do we else but
“ indulge our Appetites? And why have
“ we Appetites but to be pleased? Is God
“ a spiteful, malicious Being? Did he make
“ us to be our own Tormentors?” Next they will question God’s governing Providence. “ I am a Sinner, you tell me! What
“ is that to God? Does he trouble himself
“ with such despicable Creatures as we?
“ Does a Man concern himself whether
“ a Worm crawls right; whether the
“ Bird buildeth her Nest in Season, or the
“ Pismire gathereth in her Food for the
“ Winter? We concern ourselves with the
“ Creatures made to serve us, because it is
“ our own Concern. But (as Eliphaz says
“ in the Book of Job.) *can a Man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may
“ be profitable unto himself? Is it any Pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous,
“ or is it Gain to him that thou makest thy
“ Ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for
“ fear of thee, or will he enter with thee
“ into Judgment?*” Job xxii. 2, 3, 4.

To

To give some Answer to these Cavils (frequent enough in the Mouths of the Libertines of this Age) it is readily allowed, that God hath no Need of us or our Services, his own Happiness considered. He gives Happiness to all; but cannot receive Happiness from any, being infinitely sufficient in himself. But mean or contemptible as we may be, we are still his Creatures; and if it was not beneath his Majesty to make the World, it is not to be understood how it should be beneath him to govern it. Government without Law there cannot be; and the Law given to Man must correspond to the End of Man's Creation. What this End is, it is the Work of Reason to shew us; and when we see the Situation in which we are placed, the Purposes we were made to serve, and by what Kind of Behaviour these Purposes may best be answered, we have the natural Law before us.

Will you now say that it is nothing to God whether we observe this Law, or whether we observe it not? Whether we fulfil the Purposes of his Providence in bringing us into being, or whether we defeat them? Absurd! You may as well say
it

it is nothing to God, whether the Sun rises or sets; whether the Seasons of the Year return in their natural Order; or whether any natural Cause produceth its natural Effect. His Happiness is concerned in none of these Things; but his Wisdom is alike concerned in all of them; and to deny that it is concerned in any of them is to deny God's Wisdom in the Creation. For if it is of no Consequence whether any Creature answers the End of its Creation, or answers it not, it is plain there could be no wise End in the Creation; and to act without some wise End of Action is not acting wisely.

These Considerations will shew the true Use of our Passions, and that it is by no Means a harmless Thing when we indulge them without controul. As Reason shews us the Ends of our Creation, so our Appetites were given to excite us to Actions suitable to those Ends. We find a Pleasure in gratifying our Appetites; but they were not given us merely to please us, but to please us in a certain Degree, and within proper Limitations arising from the Law we are under. When they urge beyond this they are to be restrained, and become to
us

us the Instruments of Correction and Trial, and were so intended.---Hard Condition of our Being! you will say.---Which is saying you know not what. Would you refuse Life upon these Terms, were it in your Choice? Not if you judge wisely. For there is enough of Enjoyment within the Limits of Virtue to make Life a Blessing worth the owning. Men propose great Gains by their Vices; but for the most Part they are disappointed; and generally speaking a virtuous Life is the happiest Life, this World only considered. Exceptions may arise upon particular Cases; but these have their Recompence in the World to come. You see then, not only that it is the Law of our Being to deny our Appetite in certain Cases, but, that we have the proper Encouragement to do it: And shall we yet complain of Hardship if God punisheth us for our Neglect? What is it that justifies Punishment in all other Cases, but this, that Men transgress against the proper Encouragement to well-doing?

It is wonderful that any one should think it unworthy of God to punish us for gratifying our Passions, when it is so clear and certain from Experience, that if we give
our

our Appetites their full Scope they will be their own Punishment. What are all the evil Consequences of Excesses as to Health or Life, but the natural Punishment of our Vices? God might have given us Constitutions equal to the full Extent of our Appetites if he had so pleased; but in Fact he hath not done so. And can there be a plainer Demonstration than this, that it was the Intention of Providence that we should set Bounds to our Appetites, and that if we will not we should smart for our Folly? Now if God punisheth us for our Vices in this World, the Presumption will lie very strong that he will punish us in the next World too, if the Punishments of this Life will not answer the Ends of his Government.

I think that if God had not revealed to us his Will in this Matter, it would have been extream difficult, if not impossible, to have shewn from mere natural Principles how far it would be fitting that he should go, in punishing Sinners; which no doubt is the main Reason, why some are so desirous to shut their Eyes against the Light of God's Word. But if we will wink, we must wink at our Peril; for how uncertain
soever

soever the Notion of a State of future Punishments may be upon the Foot of meer Reason, it is most evident, that no Exceptions can arise from natural Principles, that can hurt the Credit of Revelation; and therefore this is a Point upon which Revelation has an undoubted Claim to be attended to as our Guide*. The Exceptions I have been considering, for ought I know, are the most material, and they rest upon Atheism as their chief Corner-stone, or upon something very nearly allied to it. If God has nothing to do with us, we can have nothing to do with him; and it is all one in effect whether there is no God, or whether it nothing concerns us that there be any. But as God could create us for no other Purpose, but to have to do with us, I conceive that the last Refuge of those who fall into this Way of thinking, must be absolute Atheism. They must give up the Belief of a God under the Notion of a first Cause, acting with Liberty and Foresight; and set up blind Chance or fatal Necessity in its room.

* See this whole Argument about future Punishments, largely treated of in my Boyle's Lectures, p. 235, &c.

Of all the Conceits which Science, falsely so called, hath obtruded upon Mankind, these seem to be the hardest of Digestion. But it is not impossible to reconcile ourselves to them, when our Practices grow irreconcilable to our religious Principles. In this Case if we cannot conquer our bad Habits, we strive hard to master our Understandings, and many Times with unhappy Success. Unhappy I say; for how forward soever we may be to lay aside all Thoughts of God, when we have made his Acquaintance troublesome to us, there are Times when we shall all of us be glad to have him for our Friend. Youth is rash and presumptuous; and whilst we feel no Checks, we are apt to think that this World is fully sufficient for us. But when *the Evil Day comes, and the Years draw nigh in which we shall say we have no Pleasure in them*, what shall we think then! There is an evil Day appointed for us all, and the less of Temper and Moderation we observe in our Youth, the sooner we are likely to meet it; in Poverty, or in Sickness, or in a wretched old Age, or in Death itself; And what an important Thing is it, when the glittering Scene begins to close
up

up in Darkneſs; when the Instruments of our Pleaſures fail us, or we have no longer any Taſte or Reliſh to enjoy them; to have ſome comfortable Proſpect from hereafter! This is a Point which deſerves our moſt ſerious Conſideration, and will be purſued in the next Diſcourſe.



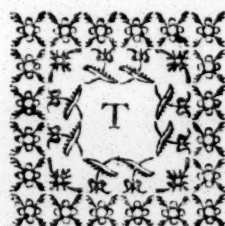


S E R M O N II.



PSALM xciv. 19.

*In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me,
thy Comforts delight my Soul.*

 H E. Judgments of Men concerning what is hurtful or profitable, are generally founded upon the Experience of Things; and where Experience can be had, it is the surest Guide to follow. The Psalmist here professes his own Experience of the Comforts of a religious Life, which he intimates were his Support when all other Comforts failed him. Solomon (from the like Experience) bears the same Testimony to Virtue, Prov. xxiv. 13, 14. *My Son, eat thou Honey because it is good, and the Honey-Comb which is sweet to thy Taste; so shall the Knowledge of Wisdom be unto thy Soul:*
When

When thou hast found it, then there shall be a Reward, and thy Expectation shall not be cut off. But bad Men have not, nor (whilst they are such) can they have this Experience. They know the whole of what there is in Vice; but of the Fruits of Virtue they know but little. This, when the Question is put, which is best for them at present, a Life of Virtue or of Sensuality, leads them to a very partial Judgment of the Case, and gives such Confidence in their own Ways, as makes it hard to persuade them that it is worth their while to try any other.

But hard as it may be to convince such Men by Reason, it is the only Remedy we have in our Hands; and therefore let us hear a little what Reason says. The Psalmist believed that there is a God, and a Providence in rewarding the good and punishing the bad; and from this, no doubt, it is, that Virtue derives its principal Support. But there are some Considerations that lie nearer at Hand; and which very well deserve our Attention.

In the first Place; though it is the lowest, yet it is no small Recommendation of a virtuous Life that it exempts us from

the evil Consequences of Vice. When Vice runs to very great Excesses, the Inconveniences are visible; and the most wary Sinner upon Earth will find, that his Pleasures will not come home to him neat. He cannot have his Sweets without a considerable Intermixture of Bitterness. It is in the Nature of Appetite to be always troublesome and craving; and it is evident that this Mischief will be perpetually increasing in Proportion as the Appetite is less confined; the Variety of the Objects multiplying the Hazard of the Disappointment. Men cannot have always all they covet, and seldom indeed can they have much of it, if they covet much; and therefore, if you would be most secure from Disappointments, the best Way is to covet no more than what is fit and proper; for in this you are most likely to succeed. To teach us this Art is the Province of Virtue: But here lies the Difficulty; and a Difficulty no doubt it is. But it is not so difficult as it is to satisfy unbounded Appetite. I believe there are many who might be very good Men, if they would take even less Pains to govern their Appetites,
than

than they fruitlessly employ in finding out the Ways and Means of gratifying them.

Let us suppose then the Thing done; and that by a diligent Care and Watchfulness over yourself, you have brought yourself into a Habit, not to be eager after any Thing, but what the Law of God and Nature allows you to enjoy; how much are you a Loser? You have fewer Gratifications it is true; but then you have fewer Mortifications too; and if you will set the one against the other, there may be no great Odds; especially if it be considered, that the Advantages of unlawful, beyond lawful Indulgence, arise principally from the Indulgence itself. If Men did not accustom themselves to unlawful Pleasures, they would have little to do with their Happiness. In other Cases we see, that to have much, or to know how to be content with a little, comes pretty near to the same Reckoning. A rich Man has many Accommodations, which a poor Man has not: But if a poor Man can confine his Desires to the Measure of his Circumstances, the Difference in Point of real Enjoyment will not be very considerable.

Will you therefore prescribe against increasing Wealth? If not; why against increasing sensual Gratifications? There is a great Difference between the two Cases. As it is natural to Men, whether influenced by Realities or caught by Appearances (for it is not material which) to desire to increase Wealth to themselves; so there are wise Ends of Providence to be served by it, separate from the Use or Enjoyment of the Possessor. An Estate honestly gotten and properly dispensed is useful to Families, and useful to the Public: But sensual Indulgence beyond a certain Limit, what is it good for? Did ever any Man serve his Family or his Country by his Debaucheries? He that gratifies his Appetites, can mean only to please himself. It is for this, that he exceeds his Bounds. But if (I say) he could learn not to covet beyond his Bounds, it would, himself considered, be just as well.

But the Advantages of Virtue are not merely of the negative Kind. There is something in them that is real and positive. Every Man has a natural Sense of Right and Wrong; and, as a reasonable Creature, must find an inward Satisfaction in

in doing proper and reasonable Things. A Man cannot do a wrong Action, though ever so secretly, but his own Mind will reproach and condemn him for it; and if his bad Actions are manifest to the World, Shame will lay hold of him, as being conscious that he must be condemned by others for what he stands condemned by himself. I expect it will be said, that all this is owing to religious Prejudices. A Man's Conscience accuses him. Why? Why because he has been taught and accustomed to consider himself as a Sinner against God, who sees his Behaviour, and will punish him for it. And this, it will also be pretended, is the Reason why bad Men (as they are esteemed) fall under the Reproach and Censure of the World, who being governed by religious Maxims, set a Mark of Infamy upon certain Kinds of Actions, which would otherwise appear to them to be of a very indifferent Nature. But all this is reasoning upon wrong Principles. For with respect to the first of these Points, the Satisfaction a Man finds in doing Things which his Reason approves; though, no doubt, it receives great Strength and Improvement from the Hopes which Religion

gion sets before us, yet it is not altogether founded in those Hopes. Men may, it is true, by bad Habits grow to be past feeling; but till they have quite changed their Natures, and made themselves what God never made them; it cannot be the same Thing to them in what Way they gratify their Appetites; whether in the Manner that Reason points out to them, or whether in the Manner that Reason disallows. What Harmony is to the Ear, or Proportion to the Eye, that is Virtue to the reasonable Mind. There is a natural Agreement between the Object and the perceptive Power, which gives a Pleasure, different it may be in the Degree and Manner of affecting us, but in Kind the same. And if the Satisfaction of virtuous Actions has some Foundation in Nature, the Judgment and Approbation of Mankind has much more so. If there was neither God nor Religion, there would be certain Bounds, beyond which Men could not indulge their Appetites without hurting others; and it is the kindly, beneficial Nature of Virtue to Society, that (principally) gains it esteem. A Man cannot do a bad Action without hurting some body or other. It
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is in the Nature of Vice, abstracted from all Considerations of Law or Appointment, to be fruitful of mischievous Effects; and for this Reason, Virtue will always be in Credit, how little soever many may care to put it in Practice. So great therefore as are all the Advantages of a good Name, (and how great they are I need not particularly tell you) just so great will be the Advantages of Virtue in this Respect, whether there were Religion, or whether there were none.

What I mean by this, is only to shew that should Virtue borrow no Aid from Religion, it has its Sweets as well as Vice; and I believe it to be as true as any Mathematical Conclusion, that upon the whole, and with Exception to particular Cases, he that would draw the most sincere Comfort from the Things of this World will find it in the Way of Virtue. But if to the natural Tendency of Virtue to promote the Happiness of Mankind, you add the Supports of Religion, the Point will stand out of the Reach of all Exception. Much Reasoning therefore cannot be necessary in this Case; it may be however fit for me to suggest

suggest a few Things to stir up your Minds by Way of Remembrance.

This World is a Mixture of good and evil; of pleasing and of painful Incidents; and in some it is pretty hard to say which of them predominates. It is the great Defect of Vice that it provides but for one State, whilst Virtue provides for both. A bad Man finds Pleasure in his Vices: But how long? Why, so long as he has Health and Vigour, and is placed in outward Circumstances suited to the Cravings of his Appetites. But when Age or Distempers grow upon him; or when the Means and Instruments of his Pleasures fail him; then all his Comforts are gone. What is to come, if it gives him no Pain, gives him no Hope; and what is past is nothing. But Virtue under such Circumstances, in a Religious Mind, from the Consciousness of what is past draws comfortable Hopes of what is to come, in this World or in the next, or in Both. Consider the different Lights in which Afflictions must appear, to the religious and unbelieving Heart. Religion tells us that all Things are under the Direction of a wise and good Providence, solicitous for the Happiness

piness of all his Creatures. Atheism sends us to wild Chance or blind Necessity, where there is neither Benevolence, nor Design, nor Will in any Thing that happens under the Sun. Now which would a Man choose in Times of Distress; to be in the Hands of a tender Parent or a faithful Friend, able to administer Relief, so far as he sees it fit and proper; or to be turned adrift into the wide World, and be left to shift for himself as well as he can, among those, who have neither Power, nor Interest, nor Inclination, to do him good? A Father may not think himself bound to relieve his Son, nor a Friend to assist his Friend, in all Circumstances, and exactly in the Manner he may wish: No more is God, to succour and protect good Men. But who has the better Ground of Hope? He who has a Parent or a Friend, or he who has none? It is the Condition of every bad Man (and a very miserable State it is) to be without either Parent or Friend, such only excepted as are Creatures like himself, and cannot profit him in the Day of his Necessity. But he who hath God for his Friend, hath a sure Stake to trust to. God's Power is never want-

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ing. His Will to do us good is always the same. But he delivers us in such Ways, as will consist with the Wisdom of his Providence; sometimes, by restoring to us Peace and Prosperity in this World, but always by the Comforts of his Grace, enabling us to bear with Patience what he is pleased to lay upon us, till the great Deliverance comes; our Deliverance I mean from this *Bondage of Corruption*, when, being no longer *subject to Vanity* and Misery, we shall attain *the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*. Rom. viii. 20. 21.

Is there now any Man upon Earth, that would not be desirous of such Hopes as these? Would they, think you, be no Comfort to him in Times of Distress? Why yes; nor is there any Thing that can tempt any Man to give up the Hopes of Religion, but the Conveniency of laying aside the Fears of it. And therefore the Wisdom of bad Men resembles that of one, who should build a House to serve him only in calm and Sun-shiny Weather, but which Storms and Tempests will throw down, and leave him without Shelter. The utmost a bad Man can hope for hereafter is, to be nothing. But to hope
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for nothing, is, in Effect, no Hope; and if we have no Hope, we can have no Comfort; or none at least that can minister to us such Support as we shall find from the Consciousness of a well spent Life, and the Recompence that God hath laid up for those that love and fear him. There is that in our Nature, which anticipates to us distant Good, and makes us feel at present, what is hereafter to come. This is so true as to these earthly Things, that many Times, and for the most Part perhaps, the Pleasure of the Hope is more than the Pleasure in the Enjoyment. There is something deceitful in all earthly Good. It appears more in Prospect than we shall find real and substantial, when we come to have the Experience of it. For these earthly Things being limited in their Nature, (when their just Dimensions are as yet unknown) we are apt to carry our Ideas of them too far. But we cannot exceed in our Estimate of the Things in Heaven. We have no Ideas that will reach their utmost Limits; and what mighty Consolations must arise from such a Hope, the Substance of which cannot disappoint us, but will far exceed every
Thing

Thing which *Eye hath seen, or Ear heard, or hath entered into the Heart of Man to conceive!* St. Paul tells us he took *Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake.* 2 Cor. xii. 10. That *though the outward Man perished, yet the inward Man was renewed Day by Day; whilst he looked not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen, and had firm Hope and Trust in God, that his light Affliction, which was but for a Moment, would Work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* Chap. iv. Verse 16, 17, 18.

Against this Hope Unbelievers, as I have observed, have nothing to lay in Balance, but the miserable Hope of dying like the Beast that perisheth. Sad Case at best! but what if even this Hope should fail them? Are they sure it will not? They have now no Fears of future Judgment; and what Marvel that they have no Fears about what they never bestow one serious Thought? But the Time may come, when Reason and Conscience will have their Turn; and that will be the Time, if ever, when Appetite worn out
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by Years, or checkt and kept under by Troubles and Disappointments, is in the less Condition to give us Disturbance. Carelessness naturally breeds Presumption; and it is very customary for Men, in the Gaiety of their Hearts, to build a great deal upon very weak and slender Foundations. Suppose then that this should be the Case (and Examples of it are not unfrequent) that, after a Life spent in Wickedness, the positive self-confident Man, that would never hear or think of a God or a future State but to make a Jest of them, should now at last begin to feel that he stands not upon sure Ground; and to entertain Fears or Doubts at least, that what Religion teaches may be true; and that he is now shortly going to stand before the Presence of his great Judge, from whom he is to expect no Mercy:---Is there that Courage that can stand such a shocking Thought as this? Who will have the Advantage now? He whose *Hopes are full of Immortality*, or he who is under the miserable Apprehensions and Forebodings of Eternal Wrath?

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And now to lay these Things together, and come to the Conclusion of the whole Matter. The Question is concerning the present Advantages of Virtue and Vice to good and bad Men. It hath been shewn, that Human Prudence lays so much upon us, that were you to throw Religion out of the Question, it would in a great many (perhaps in most) Cases be for our Advantage to do virtuous Things. It hath been made appear, that when Religion is taken into the Account, it hath its Advantages too, great and considerable to those who sincerely accept and embrace it, especially under the troublesome Circumstances of Life, when worldly Comforts begin to fail us. After all this, I do not pretend to say, that there are no supposable Cases, in which, this World only considered, the Advantage would not lie on the Side of Vice; and there is the less Reason to say this, because if Virtue were absolutely and in all Respects its own Reward in this World, there would be little Foundation to look for a Reward in the next. But a future State is offered to us under the Notion of a Reward, which seems to imply that, Regard being had to this World,

Virtue

Virtue is, or may be in some Respect or other, insufficient as to its own good. St. Paul says, *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* 1 Cor. xv. 19. This shews the State of Christians in those Times, when they suffered Persecution for the Gospel Sake. I will not say, in respect of the ordinary State of Things, that if good Men had Hope in this World only, they would be of all Men the most miserable: But it may be very truly said, that as Circumstances may happen, they would be very miserable; more miserable than they would be, if their Virtues were less. It is for this Reason, that the Reward of a Life to come is set before us; that we may have a Motive to Well-doing equal to all Cases that may happen; and we must never complain of God, if he calls us to Hardships in this World, since he has provided for us so ample a Recompence in the next.

Rather should we adore that infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which hath so well provided for our Happiness both here and hereafter. The same St. Paul tells us, that *Godliness is profitable unto all Things, hav-*

ing the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Tim. iv.

18. The Promise of the Life that now is? How? Why not absolutely, but in a Degree. Upon the whole, and in the main, it is true that Virtue hath its good Fruits in this World; where Exceptions arise (as they sometimes do) there the next World comes in to our Relief, and makes good the Deficiency; so that between one and the other, we are very sure not to be disappointed. This shews Religion to be a reasonable Thing, wisely adjusted to the Exigencies of our Natures; and therefore let us not blame God but ourselves, if we do not see where our true Advantage lies. What a Reproach to our Reason is it to choose the Lot of Brutes, when God has made us for much better Things!----- Right, you will say, if you can prove it. But our Reason does not shew us that there is any Certainty in Religion; and why should we give up the present Good for something to come hereafter, which we may never find? This is the constant Cry of bad Men. There is no Certainty in Religion. The true Meaning of which is, not that Religion is absolutely void of Proof

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or even of Credibility ; but it hath not the Evidence they want, an Evidence that shuts out all Doubt, and will bear down the most obstinate Partiality. Let me ask them this plain Question. Have they that Certainty they call for on the other Side ? Can they prove that there is no God, no Providence, no future Reckoning, as plainly as they expect to have it proved that these Things are true ? They cannot do it ; and there is this Proof from Experience to shew that they cannot, that there is scarce an Atheist that ever lived, who, when he came to die, did not discover such Misgivings of Mind about something yet to come, as served to give him Pain, though (by the just Judgment of God) seldom sufficient to that clear and full Conviction which is necessary to a true Repentance.

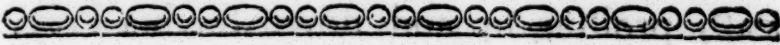
Consider these Things before it is too late ; and when *Sinners entice thee*, or thine own foolish Heart is ready to betray thee ; remember *that God will bring thee to Judgment*. If we had less Certainty of a future State than we have, it would be wise to live as if we were sure of it. For suppose you should be mistaken ; what will your

Mistake cost you? A Trifle, and a shameful Trifle too; for it is only your Vices. But the Mischief you will suffer by a Mistake on the other Side is beyond all Reckoning! It is the Loss of Eternity!



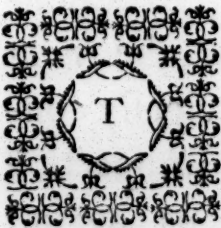


S E R M O N III.



I PETER v. 8.

Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh up and down, seeking whom he may devour.

 H E Duties here recommended, Sobriety and Vigilance, stand related to each other as the Means to the End. We are therefore to be vigilant, that we may be sober; which implies, that without Care and Circumspection in the Government of ourselves we shall be in great Danger of being overcome by Temptations. So it follows in the Reason assigned in the latter Part of the Verse, *your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh up and down,*

seeking whom he may devour. The Devil is our Adversary, as he is the Enemy to our Souls, which, by enticing us to Sin against God, he sends to everlasting Perdition. And to shew us our Danger from this grand Enemy, he is here represented to us under the Image of a fierce and ravenous Beast, prolling up and down for his Prey, and seizing and grinding to Pieces with his Teeth the helpless and unwary. This is the plain Meaning of the Text. Now for our Instruction, I purpose in the first Place to shew what Sort of Conduct it is which is here termed Sobriety; and what are those Considerations which recommend and enforce it as fitting and becoming to reasonable Creatures: And then in the next Place I shall shew wherein principally consists that Prudence and Circumspection which is necessary to secure us against Temptations, and is here expressed by the Word Vigilance.

The Word Sobriety, in its most common Acceptation, signifies that branch of moral Virtue which consists in the due Regulation of our fleshly Appetites, that is, of those Appetites which are common to Men and Brutes. Appetite excites to something
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which is necessary to our present Preservation; as for Instance, the Appetite to eat and to drink. But as it is evident from Fact and Experience, that it is not a Thing indifferent to the Body in what Degree or Measure a Man eats or drinks; as there is in these Cases a too little and a too much; there must likewise be a Mean between these two Extreams, and this Mean will be what we term Sobriety in these Respects.

Man is born the Subject of God, and lives under his Law and Government; the necessary Consequence of which is, that in the use of every Power and Faculty which he hath given us, we should have an Eye to the Ends of his Providence in bestowing them. What agrees with these Ends is naturally right. What thwarts or contradicts them is naturally wrong, and makes us Transgressors of his Law, and Contemners of his Sovereign Authority. God gave us Life that we might each of us fill up the Part assigned us in the general System of Things; and therefore we are not at Liberty to throw it away as we please, but are bound to uphold it to the utmost of our Power. He hath appointed our Food
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to be the Sufenance of Life, and when we eat and drink to our Health and Refreshment we use it properly : But to eat or to drink to the impairing our Health, that is, to the Destruction of Life, is an abuse of his Creatures, and little differs from Self-Murder. For what Difference does it make, if a Man shortens his Days and dies before his Time, whether he does it by frequent Debauches or by a Glafs of Poison? You will answer perhaps, that in the one Cafe the Mischief is intended ; in the other not. But this is not always true, and perhaps it is very seldom so. A Man may not indulge himself in an intemperate Way of living, with direct Intention to kill himself : The first Thing in View in such Cafes is, for the most Part, merely to please the Appetite. But what then? Are we to learn nothing from Experience and Observation? If we are to learn any Thing, we have warning sufficient from what we every Day see, that the natural Tendency of Intemperance is to destroy Health, and shorten Life; and the Mischief therefore must be virtually intended: For he that chooses an Act, chooses it with all its known or probable Consequences.

quences. This should more especially be urged upon those who feel the Beginnings of the Mischief within themselves, and yet will not refrain; which is frequently the Case. Nature gives us many kindly Warnings, if we are wise enough to take Notice of them: And if we will not, the Sin and the Mischief will lie at our Doors.

Under this Circumstance then it is evident, that the Sin of Intemperance is an act of Disloyalty to God. Take it in another Light, and it will be injustice towards Men. Our Duty towards God and towards one another are so closely linked together, that he that transgresseth one commonly transgresseth both. In the present Case, if a Man destroys himself by Intemperance, he deprives his Family and his Dependants of their natural Support, which is many Times a very great and cruel act of Injustice. A like Offence it is, when by the Expensiveness of this Vice Men leave their Families Beggars, or disable themselves from discharging their just Dues to those with whom they are concerned in Traffic and Commerce. Nay, suppose that a Man keeps clear of the Law; that he can satisfy his Creditors; maintain him-

himself and those who depend upon him, without being burdensome to others ; still he may be unjust in a lower Sense of Injustice. For out of every Superfluity something is due to our Families, something to our Country, something to our Friends, something to the Poor and Needy. How much precisely is due to each, Discretion must determine. But this we may lay down as a general Rule ; that we can call nothing absolutely our own, but what is necessary to answer the reasonable Purposes of Life. All that is wasted extravagantly is spent unfaithfully ; for it is a Drawback upon somebody or other, who ought to have been the better for it.

As Intemperance draws along with it great Expence of Money ; so it is also a great Devourer of Time. And if those who are addicted to this Vice would seriously consider with themselves, to how much better Purposes they might apply that Leisure which is spent in idle Conversation ; they would see great Cause to be ashamed of their Conduct. There is no Man so insignificant but that he may, in some respect or other, be useful to the World ; and every Man is bound to be so in a Man-

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ner and Measure suitable to his Station and Abilities. As sociable Creatures we have all of us need of each other; and Life would be a most insipid and uncomfortable Thing, were it not for the mutual Exercise of good Turns. This is the great Cement of Friendship; the peculiar Happiness, as it is the peculiar Distinction, of reasonable Creatures. Now Intemperance deprives us, not only of the Opportunities of doing good Offices, but frequently, even of the Capacity for it. For a Man in such Cases is capable, by his Skill, by his Activity and Dexterity in Business; all which suppose a natural good Understanding improved by Use and Exercise in the laudable Occupations of Life. But Voluptuousness begets in us a habit of Indolence, and loses us almost wholly in ourselves: And when Intemperance grows to that Degree of Excess as to impair the Body, it usually weakens the Force and Vigour of the Mind, and makes us as unable to contrive, as we are to execute. How many are the miserable Examples of those, who, by their natural Endowments and the Advantages of their Situation, seem to have been intended by Providence for great Matters, who

who have yet, by their debauched and sottish Lives, utterly disqualified themselves from being *in* any Degree useful, either in a public or private Capacity! To behave in this Manner shews not only a want of Virtue, but a want of common Sense; for it is sacrificing to brutal Appetite that Esteem, which the World is always ready to pay as a just Tribute to good and beneficial Actions, and making ourselves the Jest and Scorn of Mankind. As there is nothing so useless as a Sot, so there is no Character which so certainly, and so deservedly, exposes Men to Contempt; which would be a mortifying Consideration, if they were able to reflect. But the Truth is, sensual Indulgence spoils us for Reflection; as it does for every Thing else; which makes the Case so much the worse, as it makes it the more desperate.

And this suggests another Reason to shew the mischievous Nature of this Vice, which is, that it unqualifies us for intellectual Improvements, the much better Half of human Good. The Beasts have nothing to do, but to eat and to drink, and to follow Appetite. And if we, though by our natural Gifts qualified for more noble Ends, will

will mind nothing else, wherein, I beseech you, do we differ from them? But is it no Offence, think we, if, when God hath made us Men, we degrade ourselves into Brutes? Is this answering the Ends of his Providence? If God hath given us Reason, he gave it us for something; and what is so proper a Use of Reason, as the Improvement of Reason? What is there that can minister such solid, lasting Satisfaction to the Nature of Man? The Pleasures of the Body are not only apt to cloy and lose their Relish by frequent Use, but are many Times attended with uneasy Consequences. But the Pleasures of the Mind suffer no Abatement by the Enjoyment of them. Every Acquisition in Knowledge sharpens the Appetite after new Enquiries, which are always new Entertainments. Every Improvement in Virtue leaves us more and more satisfied with ourselves: And when we meet with those Returns from Mankind, which are due to our Merit (which in one Way or another will seldom fail us) we have all the Happiness in Possession that this World can give us. But this is all lost to a sensual voluptuous Man, who, wasting his Time in a useless unthinking Way,

Way, knows little beyond what he feels ; nor feels any Thing that can give him Comfort, but what his Horſe or his Dog feels (perhaps) with a quicker Senſe than he.

It is ſcarce needful for me to obſerve to you, that what has been offered upon the Sin of Drunkenneſs will, in the main, hold againſt her almoſt conſtant Companion, the Sin of Whoredom; and if more might be ſaid, it will, perhaps, beſt ſuit the Decency of this Place, to paſs it over in Silence. I go on then to what I propoſed in the ſecond Part of this Diſcourſe, viz. to ſhew wherein principally conſiſts that Prudence and Circumſpection, which is neceſſary to ſecure us againſt the Temptations to both, and which is here expreſſed by the Word Vigilance.

Vigilance hath Reference to Danger; and our Danger threatens from ourſelves or others. From ourſelves, as we have naturally the Motions of Appetite within us, and may not always be careful to correct their firſt Irregularities, or to avoid thoſe Occaſions which are apt to lead us to Exceſs. In theſe two Points principally conſiſts the Prudence of a Man ; to check the
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very first Beginnings of Vice, and never suffer our Passions to grow upon us by Use and Indulgence. Our Passions as God gave us them are within the controul of Reason: Leave them to themselves, and they will acquire a Strength beyond what is natural; and then Reason may be too weak to govern them. No Excess therefore, though ever so small, should be neglected; for small Excesses, by being often repeated, will grow into great ones; and what a very little Pains would have corrected at first, by being neglected, may grow to be insuperable. It is thus in the Body. Little Ails grow into mortal Diseases; the peccant Humours spreading themselves like Leaven, and tainting the whole Constitution. It is the same Thing as to the Mind; where there is a perpetual Conflict between Reason and Appetite, and the Passions are always working to get themselves more Scope and Liberty. When Sin is repeated we seldom stop exactly at the same Point. One Act of Excess usually improves upon another, the Appetite upon every Indulgence growing more eager and importunate. Whenever we observe this in ourselves (which we

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shall very quickly do) there is but one safe Course for us left, which is to take up a firm and steady Resolution and break off all at once; for there is no knowing how far the next Sin may carry us. When Men have been long habituated to vicious Courses, this may not be always practicable. In such Cases they must do as when they are deeply run in Debt; get out by Degrees as well as they are able. But if a Man's Stock is equal to it, it is always best to keep a clear Reckoning; and this is the Case at first setting out; for though the natural Strength of a Passion is not the same in all Tempers and Constitutions, it is always so proportioned to the other Powers of the Mind, that no Man is left under a Necessity of being vicious. It may be hard to abstain, and will be so more or less, as the Passions are naturally weaker or stronger; but it is not a Thing impossible if we will resolve upon it heartily.

But here lies the main Difficulty; so to resolve as to not unresolve again, when the next Occasions of Sin offer themselves. When a Man has been guilty of an Act of Intemperance, and comes coolly to reflect
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upon what he has done, it is an easy Matter for him to make good Resolutions, and he will naturally do so, if he has any Sense of Virtue ; but we see by numberless Instances, that when the sober Fit wears off, and the Gaiety of Mens Spirits throws them a little off their Guard, such Resolutions are very apt to end in nothing. When this is found to be the Case, the Rule of Prudence is plain and easy. Cut off those Occasions so far as you are able. So Solomon advises, Prov. xxiii. 31. *Look not thou upon the Wine when it is red, when it giveth its Colour in the Cup, when it moveth itself aright ; at last it biteth like a Serpent and stingeth like an Adder.* So Ecclus. ix. 7. 8. *Look not round about thee in the Streets, neither wander thou in the solitary Places thereof ; turn away thine Eye from a beautiful Woman ; look not upon anothers Beauty---for herewith Love is kindled as a Fire.* The Occasions of Sin are not absolutely to be avoided, what Care soever we may take. The World is full of them. Wheresoever we go, howsoever we may be employed, they haunt and intrude themselves upon us. They follow us in our most secret Retirements : For we may be

our own Tempters, and the Heart may Sin whilst the Body is undefiled. But these are not the Things that make the great Havock of human Virtues. They are Occasions wilfully sought and deliberately indulged; such as the frequenting Places of public Resort, where nothing is driving on but Mirth and Gaiety. Where the Ear is caught by unchaste Speeches, the Eye by light or immodest Representations; where Virtue is ridiculed, and Vice dressed out in artificial Colourings to hide its Deformities, and heighten whatever in it there may be that is tempting and ensnaring. Persons that set a due Value upon their Virtues should avoid such Places as they would a Pest-house: It is like breathing an unwholesome and infected Air. The Mischief may not presently shew itself; but it leaves those Impressions upon the Mind, that future Incidents may ripen up into very fatal Mistakes in Conduct.

From those Dangers which arise from ourselves, by the neglecting to watch against the Beginnings of Vice, and cutting off the Occasions of Sin; I come now to consider those which threaten from others. The Text only mentions our great Adversary

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the Devil, who, as a roaring Lion, walketh up and down seeking whom he may devour. I shall not enter into Speculations about the Nature and Operations of evil Spirits, and their* Intercourse with Mankind. If you will believe your Bible (and if you will not, you will not believe Me) *Sin is of the Devil*; which should give us a dreadful Idea of it; for he is our Enemy, and means our Destruction. It is for this Reason, I presume, that the Wisdom of God hath thought fit to acquaint us with the Agency of the Devil in this Case; to instruct us, that, in how plausible a Light soever Vice may represent itself to us, it is nevertheless a Stream issuing forth from the first bitter Source of all our Woes; and that, pleasing as the Bait may be, it carries Death in its Bowels.

As the Devil tempted at first by his Agents or Instruments, so he does now. The Serpent beguiled Eve, she her Husband. And thus one bad Man corrupts another, either by his bad Example, or by his evil Conversation, or by Both. Bad Company may be avoided, and must be

* See Boyle's Lecture, p. 216, &c.

avoided if we mean well to ourselves; for can a Man *touch Pitch* and not be *defiled*? Ecclus. xxxi. 1. But there is no such thing as avoiding bad Examples. When I chuse a bad Companion it is my own Act. When a bad Example is set me, it is anothers Act; and when the Act is publick and notorious, it is not in my Power to say, “ I will not see it, I will not know it.” The work of Christian Prudence therefore, in this Case, cannot be to remove the Example; but to fortify ourselves by such Considerations as may be proper to defeat its Influence.

Example has in all Cases, generally, a great Weight in determining the Conduct of Men. In some Cases it is right it should be so; in others it is wrong: And to shew you the true Distinction between these Cases, it will be necessary to consider what it is that gives to Example its proper Force.

Every Man's Conduct is ordinarily presumed to be the Transcript of his Mind or deliberate Judgement; and a Man's Judgement weighs more or less according to the Opinion we have of his Wisdom. When Madmen or Fools do extravagant or ridiculous Things, we do not make them our Examples,

Examples, because we consider them not as the Effects of a reasonable Judgment; which is Proof beyond all Contradiction, that Example so far, and so far only, weighs with reasonable Men, as it may be presumed to be the Result of Wisdom; and in Cases where we have not Light enough to direct ourselves, the Example of others, of whose Wisdom and Integrity we are reasonably persuaded, will be the best Rule we have to go by. It is upon this Principle that we trust Physicians with our Lives, and Lawyers with our Estates: And it is upon the same Principle, perhaps, that many will trust no body with the Direction of their Consciences; because they think themselves very well qualified to be their own Directors. Men may mistake in this Point no doubt, and often do. But so far as the Premises are right, so far this Conclusion is certainly so; for why should one Man make use of another Man's Eyes, when he has Eyes of his own that will see as well?

But we should take Care to be consistent in this Principle, and pursue it steadily, as well in those Things which cross our Ap-

petites as in those which sooth and flatter them. If there is any Point in which a Man may trust his own Judgment, it is in discerning the natural Distinction between Good and Evil. All Men have Capacity for this, 'till their Understandings have been tampered with, and debauched by bad Practices. Every Man, when he sets out in the World, comes under a Prepossession, that Whoredom and Drunkenness are bad Things. It is the common Sense of Mankind. And if you with your own Eyes see and know these Things to be wrong, what avails it to you, if Hundreds should act as if they were indifferent Matters? A Man's Example, as I said before, is at best but his Judgment; in the present Case it is not always even that, nor perhaps often. When we see Men allowing themselves in vicious Courses, we are not presently to infer that they act upon Principle. We may see the Turpitude of Vice, and yet practice it. When Men, wise and cautious in the Main of their Conduct, are observed to be faulty in some particular Instances, we are ready enough to

to presume, that they see those Actions, in which they are faulty, in a more favourable Light than we do; which takes off a good deal from the Abhorrence of such Actions, in Proportion to the Value we set upon the Example. This is a good Reason why we should be very careful not to set bad Examples; but it is not a Reason why we should be in haste to take them; for the Conclusion is not safe. There are none so wise, that we may venture to take their Examples in the Gross. All Men have their Weaknesses; and the greatest Weakness of all, I think, is, when we suffer ourselves to be influenced by mere Presumptions of what others may think or judge, whilst we have a sure Guide within our own Breasts, that will not deceive us, if we consult it impartially.

But suppose it were spoke out ever so plainly, that there is no Harm in following Appetite. The Question will still be, what Regard is due to it. Reason has prescribed to Appetite its certain Bounds. The Gospel confirms what Reason teaches, and bids us to be sober and temperate; to *flee Fornication*, 1 Cor. vi. 18. and that every
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Christian *should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour, not in the Lust of Concupiscence.* Theff. iv. 6, 6. Go into some Companies, and perhaps you will hear all this disputed; and the Gospel set forth as laying hard and unreasonable Restraints upon the natural Liberties of Men. But who are they that read such Lessons? Are they the sober, the temperate, and the chaste? No; they are the licentious and the incontinent. No Man attempts to corrupt anothers Principle, till he is debauched himself. And do such as these deserve your Regard in these Points? Should not their Advice always be received with strong Suspicions of Partiality? When the Minister of your Parish preaches to you *Righteousness, Temperance, and a Judgment to come*, you are apt to flight him, and say, it is his Trade. But if a Rake or a Sot gives you a Lecture of Vice, to him you will listen. But why? Is there any Thing more any Man's Trade, than promoting Wickedness is the Trade of bad Men? He that falls in with a bad Man in his vicious Ways, offers a high Compliment to his Judgment; for it is
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treating him as if he were wiser than Parents, and Lawgivers, and even than God himself. Besides, when a Man justifies Vice in another, he justifies it in himself; a Consideration of no small Weight; for there are a great many who are well enough contented to be known to be Debauchees, who would be loth to pass with the World for Madmen or Fools.

These are the Reasons which should always lead us to suspect the evil Counsels of bad Men: They have a plain Interest in the Case. To consult with lewd Company about Sobriety and Temperance is like advising with Highwaymen and Pickpockets about Honesty and Justice. But the shorter and the better Way will be to stop your Ears against such Counsellors as these, and have no Fellowship with them. For Intimacy and Familiarity with bad Men gives them Opportunities to offer those Trials to our Virtues, which no wise Man should ever hazard. A wicked Companion watches our unguarded Moments, and falls upon us by Surprise, when we are under no Preparation to make our Defence. When the Heart is made merry with Wine; when the Mind lays aside its

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Severity, and is worked up into a gay and easy Posture by Wit and Raillery; then every Thing comes unsuspected, and passes without Scrutiny. And then perhaps it is that we are at first enticed to commit actual Sin; which these Artists know how to represent in some softening Light, to those who cannot yet bear a direct Attack upon their religious Principles. Consider now the Danger you are in, when once a Breach is made upon your Virtue. The Mind uneasy upon the next cool Reflection! The Appetite sharpened by the Taste of new and unexperienced Pleasures! Reason pulling one Way, and Passion driving another!--Under this Struggle of Mind, when the Ballance is brought near to an equal Poise, a little Matter will turn the Scale; and the Ear, prepared to receive smooth and flattering Advice, will greedily imbibe whatever is offered in Disparagement of Religion: And when once Principle is gone, Virtue will have lost all Ground to stand upon. He that acts against Conscience may repent; but he that sins without Conscience is lost beyond Recovery.



S E R M O N I V.



MATTHEW vii. 12.

*All Things whatsoever ye would that Men
should do to you, do ye even so to them;
for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I T would be to little Purpose to
trouble myself or you in seeking
a Connexion between this Sen-
tence and the Verses immedi-
ately going before. It is a Sentence that wants
nothing but its own Light to shew its Mean-
ing; and is of that Weight and Consequence,
that it ought to be deeply engraven in every
Man's Heart. It is here supposed.

I. That every Man has a natural Sense
and Apprehension of Right and Wrong;
which is always felt when the righteous or
unrighteous Dealings of others come to
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affect ourselves. For if all Actions were alike to us, there would be no Reason why we should chuse one Kind of Treatment rather than another. But our Saviour supposes, that there are some Things which we would that others should do unto us, and others again that we would not ; and the Thing is so notorious in Fact, that to call it in Question, would be to renounce common Sense. Some have gone so far as to deny that there is any natural Distinction between Right and Wrong. But who will believe them in what they say, or can suppose even that they believe themselves, so long as there is in them a Sense of Injury, which, when it touches their own Persons, they cannot dissemble ? If a Man should beat such a Philosopher as this, no doubt he would complain of Ill-treatment. But why so, I would ask, if there is nothing wrong ? If it were all one, in point of natural Equity, whether a Man meets a civil Salutation, or whether another finites him on the Face ? If a Tree should accidentally fall upon you whilst you are walking and wound you, you would lament your ill Fortune ; but you would not complain of the Tree : But if a Man should,
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without Provocation, assault and wound you, you would complain: Because the Tree cannot do wrong; the Man can. It is supposed,

2. That the Law of Right and Wrong is to all Mankind but one. For if Mankind were under different Laws, this would enforce a Diversity of Behaviour; and the Rule in many Cases would be, not to do unto others as we would be done unto. The same Behaviour, no doubt, will not suit with all Men: But this is not because the Law differs, but because the Circumstances and Relations of Men are different; in which Case the Law itself directs to a Diversity of Behaviour. For Instance; if a Servant should refuse to do his Masters Work, the Master might well complain: But if in Virtue of this Rule, *do as you would be done unto*, the Servant should say to his Master, go and do my Work because you expect I should do yours, it would be ridiculous. For Circumstances differ. The Master has a Right to expect Work from his Servant; but the Servant has no Right to expect Work from his Master. Therefore in all Cases we must see that Circumstances be alike, and then there

there can be no Possibility of Mistake: For no Reason can be given why (like Circumstances concurring) any Action which is Right or Wrong in one Man, will not be equally so in every Body else.

3. Since our Saviour refers to the Law as the Measure of Right and Wrong, it is farther supposed, that his Rule, to do unto others as we would be done unto, cannot alter the Nature of that Law, nor ought to operate in Contradiction to it. He doth not say, that what we will that Men should do unto us is therefore right because we will it; but he supposes Right or Wrong to be in its own Nature a fixed determined Thing, and only presumes, that we shall naturally distinguish the one from the other, when we ourselves are to have the Advantage of the Determination. There are some Cases in which a Man's Passions will be gratified by suffering a wrong Action; as, if a Man be weary of his Life, he would be willing that some-body should kill him: But as this will not justify him in suffering such Action, so neither would it excuse him in doing the same Action to another under like Circumstances. For here the Law is set aside, which it was not
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our Saviour's Intention to destroy by this Rule, but to enforce.

4. Since our Saviour's Discourse manifestly relates to that Sort of Duty which lies between Man and Man, and to that only; it is clear that when he mentions the Law as fulfilled, he means only that Branch of the Law which concerns Justice and Charity. *This is the Law, i. e.* by thus doing ye will do all that the Law requires in these Points. But we are not to infer from hence that Justice and Charity are absolutely the whole Law of God; for this is neither true in itself, nor will our Saviour's Words warrant any such Construction. It is observable what he says, Mat. xxii. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* How do the Law and the Prophets hang upon two Commandments, if they are fulfilled by one? To love our Neighbour as ourself, is in other Words to deal by him as we would desire to be dealt with

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ourselves,

ourselves; which is the very Duty commended to us in the Text as that by which the Law is fulfilled. But absolutely fulfilled hereby the Law cannot be; for our Saviour tells us that to *love the Lord our God, is the first and great Commandment*. Justice and Charity may well be ranked among the weightier Matters of the Law, and so our Saviour has placed them; and the Presumption that those who are careful in so considerable a Branch of their Duty will not be wanting in the rest, may be admitted as the Reason, why they are sometimes spoken of in Scripture, as if nothing else was necessary. But be the Matter of a Law of greater Weight or of less, yet so long as it is a Law, it ought to be observed, as our Saviour himself has decided upon this very Case. Matt. xxiii. 23. *Woe unto you Hypocrites, for ye pay Tythe of Mint and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment and Mercy; these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone.*

Thus much being said in Explanation of the Rule; let us consider why our Saviour thought it proper to refer us to our

own Sense of what is right and fit with regard to ourselves, to qualify us to do what is right and fit by others. And the Reason is, that by appealing to ourselves, we call in our natural Passions and Feelings to assist us in our Duties. What Duty is, the Law shews; which we shall the more readily understand, and be the more disposed to practice, if we will make our Neighbour's Case our own.

There are Multitudes of Cases where the Rule of Right and Wrong cannot be mistaken, if Men are but endued with common Apprehension. He that steals, or cheats, or bears false Witness, must know that he acts unjustly, and his Reason will condemn him in so doing. But though he sees the Fault, he may feel little Reluctance within himself, because he feels nothing of the Mischief which his Neighbour suffers by his Injustice. If a Man did really feel another's Misery, he could no more bring Mischief upon him than he could bring Mischief upon himself. Feel for another (properly) we cannot; but we may consider how Evils affect Us; and when we observe the Workings of our own Passions, it gives us a kind of Fellow-feeling. It is

for this Reason that Men of savage and brutish Dispositions, are always most prone to Injustice. They feel nothing. And for the same Reason it is, that you shall often times see those who have no great Notion of Religion, not only strict Observers of Justice, but even kind and liberal merely upon the Force of their good Nature. This makes it of the greatest Importance to cultivate this Principle within ourselves; for though this Principle in itself is not Religion, it is a great Help to Religion, and the neglecting it will expose and lay us open to the full Force of our vicious Inclinations, and betray us into many bad Things.

There are some Acts of Injustice, which are shocking and hideous to Nature. Of this kind is Murder, the very Thought of which fills us with Horror. Why? Why because every Man feels the Value of Life in himself, and thence makes an Estimate what the Loss of it must be to another. If a Man had no Value for his own Life, he would be no more affected when he kills another, than the Weapon wherewith he executes his Purpose. But as Life is the most precious of all World-ly

ly Things, so Self-Preservation is the quickest and the strongest of all Passions; and proportionable to this are those Checks which Nature gives, when we entertain a Thought of taking away another's Life. So it is in all Cases, where the Circumstances of any bad Action, are attended with great Cruelty and Barbarity. It is not without Violence to themselves, that Men consent to them, till by bad Habits they are hardened and grown past feeling. But as Property is less valuable than Life, and a Man may sometimes part with a good deal of it, without being much hurt; Nature has not set so strong a Guard in these Cases. Many that will not murder, will cheat, or steal. There is not that Horror attending such Actions as these. But though Self is less concerned in these, than in the other Cases before-mentioned, it is so much concerned, that if we would impartially attend to what passes within our own Breasts, it would greatly abate the Appetite to unjust Actions. The Value of Property arises from its Use; and what is the Use of Money, or of Lands, or of Goods, we all know and feel by Experience. We feel it in the Necessaries of Life,

and in the Conveniencies of it. We feel it in our own Wants, and in the Wants of those who depend upon us. Consult yourself then, when you are going to lay violent or fraudulent Hands upon your Neighbour's Property; and if you feel so much Pleasure in taking it from him unjustly, judge what it must be to Him to keep it honestly. Unjust Men are not wont to be touched with Compassion; and what is the Reason? Why, because attending to nothing but the Calls of Avarice, they perpetually neglect their own Feelings; and never earnestly ask themselves this Question.-----How should I like to be thus treated? But if in all our Dealings with our Neighbours, we would have this Thought perpetually in our Mind, we should bring ourselves into a Habit of Compassion; and when this Point is gained, we shall find it as hard to do a bad Thing, as, if we want this natural Check, we shall find it to do a good one. A Man that wants the Bowels of Compassion, is worse than a Brute. His Reason helps him to more Ways of doing Mischief; whilst he is under no greater Restraint from doing it, than Brutes are. It is not to be supposed

posed, that a brutish Man hath any Religion: For *he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* says St. John 1 Ep. Chap. iv. Ver. 20. The Reasoning stands upon this general Principle, confirmed by Experience and Observation, viz. That we are apt to be more strongly influenced by those Things which strike upon our Senses, than by those which we come at by Reason and Contemplation only. Every inward Feeling we have, excites Love and Compassion to our Brother: But to raise our Minds to the Love of God, we shall find that we have something more to do, than to confer with Flesh and Blood: And it is not likely, that he who unconcernedly passes by what lies just before him, and is within his Reach; *which his Eyes have seen, which his Ears have heard, and which his Hands have handled;* should more attend to what lies far removed in the invisible World, and with which our Senses have no Sort of Correspondence. We see in a thousand Instances, that Humanity lays hold of many that will not be controuled by Reason; and

in Truth it is a nearer, and therefore a stronger Principle.

You see now the Use of our Saviour's Direction, when the Law is plain and clear. It leaves us under the Influence of our natural Passions, to lead us to do righteous Things: And the same Influence which moves the Will in plain Cases, will direct the Judgment in those which are dubious and obscure. Cases of this Sort will frequently arise in Traffick and Commerce; for though just Gain has a fixt and certain Proportion, yet it is, in many Instances, so difficult to come at, that he who will venture to the utmost he can go, may do hard Things. There can be no better Direction in such Cases, if Men desire to deal honestly and to stand safe and secure in their Reckoning with God at the Day of Judgment, than to follow our Saviour's Rule and do by others as they would think it reasonable to be done by themselves; for then the Determination will fall to their Neighbours Advantage; because all Men are naturally favourable to themselves. If all Men would act with this Reserve and Moderation, and be rather inclined to take something too little, than

than to exact a great deal too much ; it is plain to be observed, how much it would contribute towards making Commerce both easy and safe. Nor would any one be hurt by this; for what the Seller yields to the Buyer, he would again receive in his Turn, when he himself comes to be the Buyer. This will be the Case, if all Men would act by the same Rule. But if when one Man yields something, another is struggling for the last Mite; that will happen, which happens in many Cases, where honest Men have to do with Knaves : The honest Man will be the Sufferer. And so we must all of us, in our Turns, be content to be in this World, if we look for a Recompence in the next.

In Matters which concern distributive Justice, the Rule will have its use, though there be not equal Occasion to have Recourse to it. In common Traffick every Man is, naturally and in some Sort, both Party and Judge, and therefore will generally be in need of some Check, to sway against that Selfishness, which is apt to prevail, when we are doing Justice between ourselves and our Neighbour; and this Check we shall have, if we will transfer our own Feelings to our Neighbour's Side.

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But when a Man sits to do Justice between Neighbour and Neighbour, he is naturally no Party, (or ought to be none) and having no Interest in the Cause, he will, with less Difficulty, be able to do what is Right. But wrong Passions and bad Practices may sometimes create an Interest; and whenever there is Danger of this, the Rule should be at Hand; *do as you would be done unto*. When a Judge puts forth his Hand to receive a Bribe, it is the same Thing as if he was picking a Pocket; and if he would feel the Iniquity in his own Cause, he will feel it in the Cause of another, if he will make that other's Cause his own.

In Judgments concerning Matters of Publick Offence, the Rule is not less useful, nor less sure; but there is more Difficulty in the Application: Because here those tender Passions, which give force to the Rule in other Cases, are very apt to pervert it. When a Wretch stands trembling and pale before the Seat of Judgment, ready to receive Sentence of Death; the Judge, if he attends to nothing but the Miseries of the Offender, may receive a Byass to the Obstruction of Justice. But it should be considered, that as there is a
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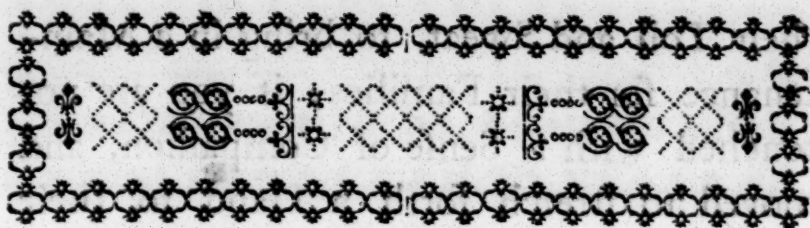
Compassion due to the Offender, there is a Compassion likewise due to the Publick, that is, to all who may be Sufferers, if the Offender escapes the Punishment due to his Crime. If you put yourself therefore in the Place of the Offender, you must put yourself in the Place of the Publick too, and then the Rule will have its proper Force, and the Hands of Justice will be at Liberty; for better is it that a guilty Man should die, than that the innocent should suffer. That is a cruel Mercy indeed, which spares one to the Destruction of many.

But in no Cases is our Saviour's Rule of greater or more necessary Use, than in those which concern Charity. The Law of God is plain and express, that those who are rich should administer to the Poor, according to their Abilities; but to whom, or how much precisely, every Man should give, the Law saith not; the Law could not prescribe. Now in this Case, when a Man is to part with something, which he is supposed to value himself, and hath nothing to determine him, as to the Manner and Measure of doing it, but his own Ingenuity; it is highly requisite that he be
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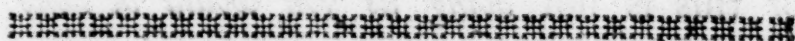
possessed of such a Sense, as may give him a Kind of Interest in his Neighbour's Misfortunes; otherwise his Hands will often be shut when they should be open, or he will content himself with giving a Mite, when a Talent, perhaps, will not be more than his due Proportion in His Reckoning, to whom we stand accountable at the Day of Judgment. Occasions can never be wanting to give us this Sense, if we will attend to what we ourselves experience in Life. Those who have drank the bitter Cup of Affliction have, in their own Misfortunes, a most powerful Motive to pity the Misfortunes of others. But all of us have our natural Appetites, our natural Wants, and our natural Gratifications. We know what it is to be full, or to be hungry; to be cloathed, or to be naked; and when we feel the Comforts of our Abundance, cannot we guess a little, what must be the Hardships, and the Miseries of a poor Condition? I am no Advocate for the Idle and the Disorderly; for those who are Beggars by Choice, and had rather do any Thing than work. But when you observe the Honest and Industrious, striving hard to live, and yet unable, by all
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their Toil and Sweat, to bring in a Maintenance for their Families; if you are not touched with a Sense of Compassion, and moved to stretch forth a Hand to their Assistance, it is a Sign that you little consult yourselves; little attend to the Call and Admonition of our Lord and Saviour; for this is not *doing as you would be done unto.*

One Thing let me just mention in the Close of all, which is, that when our Saviour calls upon us to consult ourselves; his Meaning is not that we should attend to our Passions, and to them only. Prudence is always to be supposed, which if a Man wants, he may be undone by his good Nature. Instances of this sort are sometimes seen; but they are so very rare, that I need not warn you on this Head. The general Fault of Mankind is, not that they have too much Compassion, but that they have too little. It is to this general Case that our Saviour's Rule is suited; and God grant that we may all of us honestly put it in Practice.

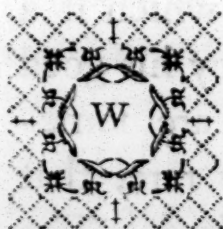


S E R M O N V.



LUKE xii. 15.

Take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth.



E read in the foregoing Part of this Chapter; that whilst our Saviour, in the Presence of a great Multitude of People, was instructing his Disciples; *one of the Company said unto him, Master, speak to my Brother that he divide the Inheritance with me.* Our Saviour answers in Effect, that this was none of his Concern; and takes Occasion hence to warn his Disciples against that groveling, worldly Spirit, which put the Man upon making so impertinent a Request. *Take heed and beware of Covetousness.*

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There is no Vice which the Gospel brands with greater Marks of Infamy, than this of Covetousness; and yet, perhaps, there is no Fault in human Conduct upon which good Advice is so often lost. One Reason is, that it is not easy to set forth its exact Bounds; whence it falls out, that when the Vice is censured and exposed, there are few who think themselves concerned in the Application. All Men will allow Covetousness to be a bad Thing; but who thinks himself to be a covetous Man? The Ground of the Mistake is pretty plain. It is not every one that values Money that is covetous, but he that loves it beyond Measure. We must see therefore where the Measure lies, before we can know that we exceed our Bounds; and here it is that we are apt to deceive ourselves. Excess is not so easily perceived in this as in many other Cases. If a Man eats too much, or drinks too much, Nature is ready to give him Warning. Reason does the same Thing in Matters where Justice is concerned. A Man cannot cheat or steal, for Instance, and not know it; for Property is one fixed, determined Thing; and he that takes what he knows not to be his

his own, knows himself to be a Knave. But a Man may hoard up for ever, and still perswade himself that he is not covetous; for mere gathering Money is not Covetousness; because there may be very proper Ends served by gathering, in which there is great Variety and Latitude. The use of Money is to supply the Necessities, and to serve the Conveniences of Life. What is necessary, may perhaps be easily enough settled. But when you come to talk of Conveniences, where will you find that Measure which all will stand by?

Again: No one judges it right to provide barely for his present Occasions, but thinks it proper to have something in Store against a Time of Need; to which the Scripture seems to give Encouragement, Prov. vi. 6. *Go to the Ant thou Sluggard; consider her Ways and be wise; which having no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest.* Something is to be done for hereafter; but how much it will be very hard to say.

Once more: There is a Care due to our Families, as well as to ourselves. For *he that provideth not for his own, especially those*
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of his own House hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. 1 Tim. v. 5, 8. But how far this Care of Families ought to extend ; or in what Degree and Measure they should be provided for ; are Questions which will admit of no certain Answer, and which, to those who are willing to make Use of them, will furnish out Matter for a Variety of Excuses and Colourings.

From these Reasons it appears, that we are not to take our Notions of a covetous Man, merely from the Quantity of what he possesses. And how then are we to judge ? Why from the Mind or Spirit with which he possesses it. If a Man doats upon Money, and it becomes to him the Means of drawing off his Trust and Confidence from God to place it upon Riches ; he is a covetous Man though he be not worth a Groat. And on the other Hand, where there is Reverence to God, and a due Reliance upon his governing Providence, the greatest Abundance will be a laudable Possession. That this was our Saviour's Sense of this Matter is clear, both from the Case which introduced this

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Caution, and from the Parable subjoined by way of Enforcement and Illustration.

As to the first; Christ came to shew us the Way to eternal Life. This was the proper End of his Mission; this the constant Subject of all his Instructions. But instead of attending to this, the Man comes and asks him to *speake to his Brother to divide the Inheritance with him*; which shewed that his Mind was wholly intent upon Lucre, and that if he could but secure his Property in this World, it little concerned him what became of him in the next. This is a covetous Spirit (whether a Man hath Money or whether he hath none) when the Desire of Gain so encumbers us, as to make us negligent of the *one Thing needful*. The Parable which follows, speaks to the same Purpose. *The Ground of a certain rich Man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, what shall I do because I have no Room where to bestow my Fruits? And he said this will I do; I will pull down my Barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my Fruits and my Goods; and I will say to my Soul, Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink*

drink and be merry. The Man was raising up a Battery to himself, which was to stand all the Shocks and Onsets of Fortune; and without so much as a single Thought of his Dependance upon God, talks of nothing else but eating and drinking, and making merry. It does not appear that He who desired our Saviour to speak to his Brother to divide the Inheritance, was rich. This Man had great Abundance; so much that he scarce knew what to do with his Fruits and his Goods. But the same Spirit prevailed in both. A Concern for this World, to the Neglect of God: A drawing off of the Mind from Him to trust in Riches. This is precisely the Sin of Covetousness; as it is explained in the Book of Job xxxi. 24. *If I have made Gold my Hope, or have said to fine Gold thou art my Confidence. If I rejoiced because my Wealth was great, and because my Hand had gotten much---I should have denied the God that is above.* If I rejoiced, that is, if I so rejoiced as to forget God, or as trusting in myself and in the Abundance of my Possessions; the very Case of the rich Man in the Parable, who is represented as *rejoicing* in his Wealth, and saying to his Soul,

Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink and be merry. Therefore our Saviour in another Place, explains Covetousness by *trusting in Riches.* *How hard is it for them that trust in Riches to enter into the Kingdom of God?* Mark x. 14. And so St. Paul, *Charge them that are rich in this World that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain Riches,* 1 Tim. vi. 17. Agreeable to this, Covetousness is in Scripture stiled *Idolatry.* Col. iii. 5. Eph. v. 5. And Job (in the Passage above cited) ranks this Sin with the most notorious Acts of Idolatry, the worshipping the Sun and Moon. *If I rejoiced because my Wealth was great.----If I beheld the Sun when it shineth, and the Moon walking in Brightness; and my Heart hath been secretly enticed, or my Mouth hath kissed my Hand----I should have denied the God that is above.* Why is Covetousness Idolatry more than Fornication or any other Sin, but for this, that it implies a drawing off the Heart from God to trust in Riches? He that indulges a brutal Appetite against Reason and Conscience, is a Sinner before God; but he does not thereby assume to himself Self-sufficiency, as He doth who trusts

trusts in Riches. He that trusts in Gold, trusts to it as the Instrument to deliver him from Evil, and to procure to him whatever is useful or desirèable in Life; and that is my God in which my Strength and my Confidence lies. *Deliver me for thou art my God*, was the Language of the Heathen World to their graven Images. Isaiah xliv. 17. Their Trust was their Idolatry. It is all one whether a Man trusts to a Bag of Gold, or to an Image of Gold. The one is as much an Idol as the other.

Let us now see by what Symptoms, this evil Disposition of Mind is wont to discover itself. And in the first Place give me leave to observe; that it makes a very essential Difference in this Case, whether a Man gathers Wealth by honest or by dishonest Means. He that covets and lays his Hands upon another Man's Property (which is the Case in all unlawful Gains) by that very Act disclaims all trust in God, and places it on Riches; for he cannot be supposed to trust in him, whom, by the Breach of his Laws, he sets at Defiance. But to compleat the Notion of a covetous Man, I apprehend we must take into the Account,

the Spirit with which he uses Wealth when gotten, whether honestly or dishonestly. If a Man cheats, steals, or oppresses, he gets Money unlawfully. But if he lavishes it away as fast as he gets it, we call him rapacious and profuse, but we are not wont to say he is covetous. Covetousness (in common Speech) carries with it the Notion of Tenaciousness. The Money may be honestly come at; but if the Use of it centers too much in a Man's self, he is properly a covetous Man. There are two Characters which will fall under this Censure.

1. The Niggard; whom you will find described by Solomon, Eccles. iv. 8. *There is one---who hath neither Child nor Brother, yet is there no End of all his Labour, neither is his Eye satisfied with Riches, neither saith he, for whom do I labour and bereave my Soul of Good.* This is the Character of one who gathers Wealth merely for gathering Sake: Without view to Posterity; with no purpose of Advantage to himself, save only the Pleasure of *beholding it with his Eyes.* Chap. v. Vers. 11. What is this Pleasure of the Eye? The mere Entertainment of the Sense considered, a Peacock's Tail is a
much

much finer Sight than a Heap of Money. Again; why doth the Man abstain? Relations he has none; for himself alone he gathers. And why then will he not eat and drink, and enjoy the Fruit of his Labour? Is it because he hath no Appetite? Can he not taste what he eats or what he drinks? In this Respect the Covetous differ not from other Men; or if they do, it is thus; that being worse kept they are commonly more sharp when it costs them nothing. But their Case seems to be, that they will not trust that Hand which hath provided for them to-day, to provide for them again to-morrow. Their Aim is to be placed out of the Reach of Fortune, that is, out of the Reach of Providence; and trusting in Riches as their Security, they behold them with Pleasure; and the more they have the more they covet, because they never think themselves far enough out of the Verge of Danger.

2. The Voluptuous, and Illiberal; such was the Man characterised in the Parable. He loved Mirth and good Cheer. This shews that he was no Niggard. He had got Money and was resolved to enjoy the good of it; but it was only for Himself; for

amidst all his Talk of what he would do, we find not the least Mention made of any Act of Charity. He does not say, I will feed the Hungry, I will cloath the Naked, nor any Thing of this Sort; but *Soul take thine Ease, eat, drink and be merry.* Will you suppose that such Men as these are are not covetous, because they spend their Money? Try them by the Rule, and see whether they trust in God, or in Riches. The Law of God is plain and express, that they who abound should administer to the Wants of those who stand in need. The Rich are placed as Stewards over the Household of God; to whom they are accountable, if they distribute not to every one *his Portion of Meat in due Season.* As Knaves therefore get Money dishonestly, so the Uncharitable detain it unfaithfully; and consequently, neither the one nor the other can be said to trust in God; for Trust stands upon Duty as its proper Foundation. But the uncharitable Man is in a particular Manner chargeable with the want of Trust; because Charity, specially and above all other Virtues, stands entitled to the Blessings of God's Providence. *He that hath Pity*

Pity on the Poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given he will pay him again. Prov. xix. 17. The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Chap. xi. Vers. 25.

Can you suppose that a Man believes any Thing at all of these and many such like Promises which we meet with in Scripture, who grudges every Penny he spends, except it be upon himself? If such a Man's Trust then be not upon God, we are very sure it must be upon this World, that is, upon Riches; for it can be no where else. He receives Wealth, not as God's Gift, but, as his own or his Parents Acquisition; and what he has got without God, he hopes to keep without him too, in Reliance upon the common Means of human Prudence. This is to make the World his Strength, his Defence, that is, his Idol; nor does he differ from the Niggard in any Thing but this, that He realizes the Defence which Money gives, which the other enjoys only in the Imagination.

There are, perhaps, very few Instances in common Life, of Men so selfish as never to do a beneficial Action; but of those who fall short in the Degree and Measure
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of it, there are many. No wonder ; since this Measure, being an undetermined Thing, leaves a wide Door open to Excuses, which selfish Minds will not fail to lay hold of, when the Occasion of doing Good present themselves : For Covetousness blinds the Understanding ; and hides from it the Corruptions of the Heart. It is perhaps for this Reason, that our Saviour advises us to *take heed and beware* of Covetousness ; intimating that it is a sly, insinuating Vice ; hard to prevent, as well as cure. Extravagancy is often cured, Covetousness never. One Reason is, that Extravagance naturally works its own Ruin. A Man may spend so much that he shall have nothing left to spend ; and then he must retrench of Course. But Covetousness feeds itself and fattens as it grows. The more a covetous Man has, the more he wants ; and if he has not, still he may covet, and he naturally will do so, if he takes not the proper Course to prevent it. There is but one Remedy in the Case, and that is to have right Notions of the Value of worldly Things, and the Relation they bear to human Happiness. This
opens

opens a Subject too large to be handled at present, and which must be reserved to another Discourse. I shall close this with our Saviour's Observation in the Text; *A Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth.* The Meaning is, that great Possessions are no Security against Death. The Man in the Parable was contriving to enlarge his Barns, when, if he had known his Destiny, he should have been preparing his Tomb; for by next Morning there was to be a full End of him in this World. *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee! Then whose shall those Things be which thou hast provided?* This is a most convincing Reason why we should be always cool and moderate in our Pursuits of this World. For much Sollicitude must be great Folly, where there is no Security of Possession. And what Security can there be, when Life hangs upon so slender a Thread, that one Day, one Hour, one Moment, may snatch us hence, and blast all our Projects forever? Do we believe that there is an Eternity to come? I trust we believe it. And what Sort of a God is that, which cannot follow us even to the Grave, but locked up
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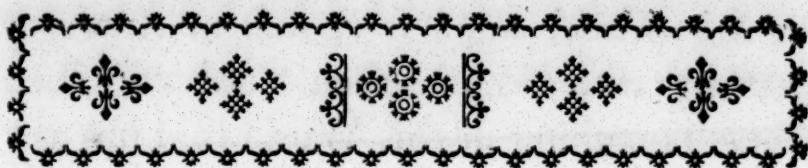
in Coffers, or fastened to the Earth or to our Walls, must tarry behind us to be the Property of the next greedy Heir; whilst We (our immortal Part) are left without Help or Stay to trust to! Those who will have their Gods on Earth, assuredly, will find none in Heaven; none, I say, to protect and comfort them: But they will find a severe Judge to punish them, when their *Garments* being *moth-eaten*, and their *Gold and Silver cankered*, the *Rust* of them *shall eat their Flesh as it were Fire!* Jam. v. 2, 3.

Let us then check the first Sallies of our Passions, which by too much Indulgence bring on bad Habits, and we shall never be at a Loss to know how to act properly. In providing ourselves with the Necessaries of Life, we shall use Pains and Industry, to keep the Burden from others who have a much less Right to bear it than we. But the Superfluities, the simple Conveniences, of Life (which are the Things that make the great Bustle in the World) we shall pursue with Indifferency; which will make us both modest in our Pursuits, and free and communicative according to the Abilities that God hath given us. Here lies the
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great Blessing of Wealth; that it ministers to us the Opportunities of doing Good; and enables us in so many Ways to give the Proofs, and taste the Sweets of a virtuous Mind. It is supposed here, that a Man does good with his own Hands. Death-bed Charity comes not with half the Grace, nor with half the Satisfaction. To do good *as we have Opportunity*, that is, constantly as Occasions offer themselves, is the Scripture Rule; and it is the proper Evidence of our Trust in God; of which it shews a great Want, when we can never bring up our Hearts to part with any Thing till we are secure of having no farther Occasion for it ourselves.

The same Rule of Conduct which is Right as to ourselves, is equally so with Regard to our Families; for whom we do much less when we leave them great Estates, than when we teach them to use a moderate Fortune well. In great Estates there are great Dangers. The Temptations they minister to Luxury and Excess are grievous Snares to young Minds; and how would a griping Father curse himself, if he should see that Treasure which hath cost him so many Pangs, thrown about like Dirt, and
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the Man made miserable by the very Instruments that were designed to serve him ! These Things the Dead know not, but the Living often see them ; and they should be a warning to all not to be over anxious for Provisions for Families. There is a Debt no doubt, due to our Children ; whom every wise Man would wish to provide for in some Way suitable to the Condition they were born to. It is the Misfortune of some, that they are born to too much : It is Folly in those who are born to Industry themselves, never to be at rest 'till they have set their Children above the Want of it ; which very Thing is many Times their Destruction.--In one Word. A reasonable Care should be taken for Families. They are the Strength of Society ; and every private Estate honestly gotten and properly used is a public Blessing. But when the Vanity of raising an Estate eats out all other Concerns, and makes Men Slaves and Vassals to the World ; it is nearly allied to Madness, and derives a Curse upon the Generations to come.

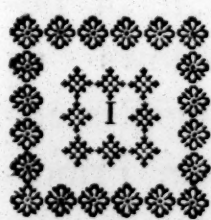


S E R M O N VI.



I TIM. vi. 8.

*And having Food and Raiment let us be
therewith content.*

 TAKE the Reason of the Advice here given, to be founded principally upon what is said in the two foregoing Verses, with which it stands immediately connected. *Godliness with Contentment is great Gain; for we brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* In which Words the Apostle sets forth the Happiness of the Life to come, which is the proper End and sure Reward of a Godly Life, as the supreme Good of Man; and reckons every Thing else as of small Account, because it is relative only to the Life that now is. *We brought nothing in-*

to this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. What then? Why, then there is nothing in this World that has any essential Relation to us, or to our Happiness. We were, before we were born into this World: And we shall yet be, when this Life shall have an End, and when the Things of this World, can be of no farther Use or Benefit to us. We must all die, as to this World; but in Respect of Being in general, we shall never die: For when we leave this Body, we do not cease to Be; we only change one State of Being for another, which knows no Change or Period. These Principles admitted (and they are the common Principles of Christianity) the Advice in the Text will come with great Pertinency and Force: *Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content.* We are sent into this World by the Will of God, to live here our appointed Time, and to Work out our Way to a better by the Exercise of Godliness. Food and Raiment, therefore, we must provide for ourselves, if they are not already provided to our Hands; for they are the Necessaries of Life. But beyond this we should be solicitous after nothing; neither

neither for Riches, nor Honour, nor Power; because they can none of them last longer than this Life lasts. We cannot carry them into the next World, and make them a Treasure to us there, where alone our true Happiness lies. The Psalmist has the same Thought, Psalm xlix. 16, 17. *Be not afraid (that is, be not thou disturbed) when one is made Rich, when the Glory of his House is increased. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his Glory shall not descend after him.* As also Solomon, Ecclesiastes v. 15. *Naked shall (Man) return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his Labour, which he may carry away in his Hand. And this also is a sore Evil, that in all Points as he came, so shall he go, and what Profit hath he that hath laboured for the Wind?* To labour for the Wind, is in plain Speech to labour for Nothing; for that which is vain and will not stick by us. So is he that laboureth for this World; which will fail him when Death comes, and leave neither Trace nor Footstep behind it.

There is not a more weighty Argument than this, to moderate our Desires after the Things of this World, and make us

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contented when God places us in low Estate. *Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not?* Says Solomon, Ecclesiastes xxiii. 5. And yet this may be the Case, if this World is thy Care. For that is not to Thee which God hath not given thee Time to enjoy. When thine Eyes are set upon gathering Wealth, what doest thou propose when thou hast got it? Is it the Happiness of an Hour or of a Day? Or *to live many Years, and to rejoice in them all?* Thou doatest upon thou knowest not what! Thy Time is not thine own but God's, who, before thou hast accomplished thy Wishes, may call thee hence, and give the Fruits of thy Labour to another.

I think this is the Apostle's Argument in its full Weight. But I would carry my Reflections a little farther; and consider what is the real Difference between a rich and a poor Man, in point of this World's Happiness. It is very true (you may reply) that Life is short and uncertain; and that when this World is past with us, the Things of this World have done their Work, and can be no farther useful to us. But, short as Life may be, it is worth while to make it easy and comfortable to

us whilst it lasts; and some Difference surely it makes in this Respect, whether a Man hath little, or whether he hath much; whether he hath before him a Variety of Means to gratify his natural Appetites, or whether he is pinned down to the mere Necessaries of Life.

A Difference it makes no Doubt; but that is not the Point in Question. The Apostle does not say it is all one as to our Happiness in this World, whether we are Rich or whether we are Poor; nor does he condemn any lawful and honest Endeavours to better our Conditions. He only bids us to be content when God places us in low Estate. This supposes that there is a Difference between the two Conditions; for if there was none, what room would there be for his Advice? Where would be the Virtue of being content? The Scripture represents Riches as a Blessing. All wise Men that have them, feel the Comforts of them; and this is the proper, natural Encouragement to Diligence and Industry in our Callings, which is recommended to us as one Branch of christian Virtue. But we may be industrious, and yet content. We may see and know the

Value of this World's Goods ; and yet not be more in haste to come at them than becomes us, nor murmur and repine at God's Providence if our Endeavours fail us. This is the Point we are to aim at ; in which we shall be the less liable to miscarry, the more just we are in our Estimate, of the Relation that Riches bear to the Happiness of a reasonable Creature. A Value they have, which is founded in the Nature and Constitution of Things, but it is very easy to mistake it ; which is indeed the common Fault of Mankind, and fruitful of a Variety of Errors in the Human Conduct.

That which leads us into this Mistake, is the forming our Judgments upon outward Appearances. Riches make a fine Shew. Discharged from the laborious Occupations of Life, the Owners dwell at Ease, and *fare sumptuously*; they are *cloathed in Purple, and in Scarlet, and in fine Linnen*; they have their Horses, and their Chariots ; their Man-Servants, and their Maid-Servants, and many other Marks of Distinction, which make strong Impressions upon unexperienced Minds. But we greatly deceive ourselves, if we imagine
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that the Happiness of a rich Man's Condition rises in Proportion to these Distinctions ;-----For let us consider.

In the first Place I am in doubt, whether an Exemption from the laborious Offices of Life, has a Title to be placed among the Advantages, or among the Snares and Inconveniences of a wealthy Condition. Man was not made for Idleness ; of which there is this certain Proof from Nature, that a lazy, unactive Life agrees neither with Body nor Mind. This is so sensibly felt, that, for the most part, those whose Conditions call them not to Labour, are forced to find out Labour for themselves, to keep them from Distempers. All bodily Exercise is so much Labour ; and how many Kinds of it are there invented by Men of Leisure, which pass under the Notion of Recreations, that (the mere Drudgery of them considered) are little inferior to working at the Anvil, or following the Cart or the Plough. Now if the Case be so that Labour is necessary ; what does it signify what it is that drives you to it, whether want of Food, or want of any Thing else ? Whether you work for your daily Bread, or whether to keep

yourself from the Gout, or from the Dropfy? One Difference there is, that the rich Man is not tied down to Labour, as the poor Man is. He may work, or he may let it alone, as he finds himself disposed. But what Difference does this make in point of Happiness? Abating for the Effects of Use and Habit, if you have Strength equal to constant Labour (which is generally the Case of those who are born to Labour) why is it not as good a Thing to labour daily, as it is to sit still sometimes and do nothing? This very Circumstance, that Men of Fortunes have it always in their Choice to labour, or to be idle, is many Times their Destruction. A Man may be convinced that a certain Degree of Labour is necessary to Health; but the Fore-sight of a Distemper to come one knows not when, weighs but little. Generally Men must feel something in such Cases, before they will take Warning; and when they do, the Indolence of their Tempers frequently gets the better of them. But Poverty forces Men to labour against their Wills; and in this respect the Poor are much happier than the Rich; that Providence hath not left that

that to their Discretion, which is so necessary to the Preservation of Life. Labour hurts no Man if it exceeds not his natural Strength; but Idleness often does. The rich Man may nauseate the Food prepared to his Hands; but the poor Man whilst he gathers together his own Sustenance, lays in that Stock of Health and Vigour, which gives him the true Taste and Enjoyment of it.

As to any Advantage that may be conceived to be in Recreations of the laborious Kind, beyond what there is in that which we properly term Labour; it seems to be little more than the Creature of the Imagination. The Pleasure of the Chase, for Instance: What is it? Or in what does it consist? There should be something in it, by the Pains that many take about it, who are very careless in every Thing else. But (besides that the Poor will have their Share with the Rich in this Sort of Diversion) one would suppose that an honest industrious Man, who by his daily Labour brings in a comfortable Maintenance for his Family; finds a more rational and manly Satisfaction in it, than there is in worrying or destroying God's

Creatures merely out of Sport. Why should I mention our domestic Recreations? Of which you cannot name one single Species which the poor Man hath not, or something equivalent to it; with this Difference, (greatly to his Advantage) that, by his Situation, he stands more secure from that Excess, which from Recreations converts them into real Mischiefs.

If there is any Thing for which one would envy the Leisure of Men of Fortunes, it is the Opportunity it gives them for Study and Contemplation; the proper Entertainment of a rational Mind. But in this we too easily run into Excess; and when we do so, it may make us more knowing, but it will not follow that it makes us happier; for Solomon hath observed long ago, *That in much Wisdom is much Grief; and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow*, Eccles. i. 28. Knowledge is pleasant to the Mind, as Light is to the Eyes; but its Concomitants, and its Consequences are often painful and vexatious. Hard Study is a Weariness to the Flesh; and wears Men out faster than hard Labour. Nor is the Mind without its Rubs and Disappointments. Be Religion your Subject; you
may

may be filled with Doubts, and after many painful Turnings and Windings, come back again to the Point where you first set out. Be History your Theme; you will see an ugly Picture of human Nature, that will give you more Disgust than Pleasure. The Rise and the Fall of States and Kingdoms, what do they shew, but the wicked Intrigues of Men pushed on by Ambition and Avarice, and making their Way through Rapine and Bloodshed? Is Wit and Humour your Delight? As these Things take their Relish from the Cast and Turn of Men's Minds; the plain Countryman, perhaps, may be as much diverted with the homely Mirth of his Companions, as the Man of Education is, with the most polished Wit of Greece and Rome. Are you fond of Musick or Painting; He has his Equivalent in Husbandry, Planting and Gardening. So, as to simple Science, such as Geometry and Mathematicks; it is a high Entertainment, no doubt, to those who have a Taste for such Studies. And yet, I am apprehensive, that every ordinary Mechanick may be as much pleased with adjusting the Movements of a Clock or a Watch, or in finding out any other ingeni-

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ous Contrivance of Art.--But it is not often, perhaps, that Men of Fortunes are thus occupied. They have too commonly other Ways of spending their Time. If they make not themselves Slaves to Avarice and Ambition, they are generally made so to Shew and Ceremony, and a thousand Kinds of Impertinencies, harder to be borne than even Idleness itself.

Let us now consider what great Abundance can do; and one Advantage we are wont to expect from it is, the discharging us of much Care and Sollicitude. But the Truth in this Case possibly may be, that he, who from a State of Poverty becomes Rich, only exchanges one Kind of Care for another. The poor Man's Care is to get Bread. The rich Man may care just as much how to improve his Substance, and increase his lesser Heap into a greater. But let us suppose him enjoying his Abundance. He hath more Food, and greater Variety, than his poor Neighbour. But he cannot eat or drink more than enough; or if he does, his Food becomes his Poison. If thou hast enough with thy Poverty, why dost thou covet Riches, which cannot give thee more than enough? If thy Thirst

is quenched, is it of any Consequence whether thou fillest thy Cup out of a great River, or out of a small Spring? But there is something that pleases in the Variety and Elegancy of your Food. Yes; to those who are not accustomed to it; and so long as the Novelty of it lasts: For Use and Familiarity makes all Things alike. When a poor Man feeds at a rich Man's Table, he is pleased. But the rich Man eats not his own Dainties, perhaps, with half the Relish, that the poor Man eats his plain, homely Food. It is so in Apparel, in Furniture, in Recreations, in every Thing, which helps to garnish and adorn the rich Man's Condition. It either grows flat and insipid, by Habit; or there is something corresponding to it in low Life that will do just as well. What is it to me, whether I am inclosed with Cedar or with Tapestry, if my Bed gives me my natural Rest, and my House keeps me warm? A wise Man is pleased with such Things, because they please others: But, as to myself, it makes no material Difference, whether I am equipped grandly, or have simply what is useful and convenient. Kings and Nobles
have

have stately Palaces. Will you say that a private Gentleman may not enjoy himself as much in a smaller and less costly House? You might, with as much Reason pretend, that I cannot be at Ease, unless my Coat or my Shoes be cut according to your Size, when, perhaps, I am not of half your Dimensions. If you go down lower, the Reckoning will be the same. Poor Men want many Accommodations, which rich Men enjoy. But if they are accommodated according to their Condition, that is, according to what they have been bred and accustomed to, they may be as happy as those who in common Estimation are better provided.

It is thus that this Case appears in the View of Reason, which every Day's Experience confirms. And the proper Inference we are to make from hence is, that Riches are very unequally divided among the Sons of Men; but Happiness not so unequally as we are apt to imagine. The Reason is, that Riches are but Instruments; and Happiness results not merely from the Instruments themselves, but from the Mind or Spirit of him that useth them. But though we are pretty well satisfied of this, it is in
most

most Men's Tempers to be aiming at something beyond what they have. I do not censure this, provided it runs not to Excess. The Excess is from ourselves; but the Passion itself is from God; and there are wise Ends of Providence answered by it; for it is this Spirit that keeps the whole World in Motion. But we generally find, that there is a great deal more in the Expectation than in the Enjoyment. Sudden Advancements, from a low to a high Condition are dangerous. Few Minds have Ballast enough to bear the Shock. But most Men creep up by little and little. And what is the Consequence? Why that in Proportion as they acquire more, they are familiarized to the Use of more; so that when they come to compare their most advanced State, as they taste and relish it, with what it appeared to them when at a Distance, they find themselves greatly disappointed. Give the poor Man who has no more than a Sufficiency, a small Sum of Money, and it will rejoice his Heart. Give the same Man, grown wealthy, a larger, and he will not feel it; for not bearing the same Proportion to his Condition, it works no Change; and it is Variety and Novelty
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(as I said before) that pleases us. Thus the World leads us on by delusive Hopes; the wise Providence of God intending this for our Instruction; that when we come to feel the Vanity and Emptiness of earthly Things in a few Instances, we may thence take an Estimate of all the rest, and direct our Thoughts to the Hopes of a better Life, which we are certain cannot fail us. This it is, and this only, that will make Wealth a real and substantial Blessing, when discharged from all Care and Sollicitude for the Body, we bend our whole Strength to improve the Virtues of the Mind; which will be a Treasure to us when Houses, and Lands, and Money, and Goods, can avail us nothing. This World, considered without Relation to any Thing farther, is nothing, or what is next to nothing. But what it wants of intrinsic Worth, it may borrow from the next. We cannot carry our Riches with us when we die; but those Virtues, of which our Riches may be made the Instruments, will follow us beyond the Grave; and the Sense and Foresight of that Treasure we are laying up for ourselves in the next World, will be the Foundation of the truest Comfort and
Enjoy-

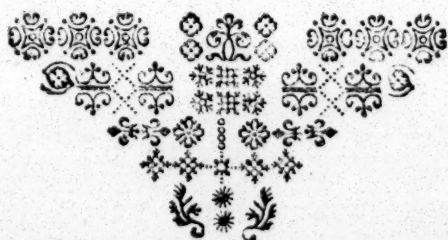
Enjoyment in this. But it is very plain, that he who looks upon Wealth in this Light, cannot make too much Haste to be rich. He cannot seek it by dishonest Ways. He cannot oppress, or cheat, or steal. For these Methods destroy the very Hopes upon which he is supposed to build. As we may make our Riches a Treasure in Heaven, so we may make our Poverty too: The first, if we dispense them well; and the last, if we bear it patiently. And something we shall find it necessary to bear in all Conditions. If we have Ease and Plenty; we may have Sicknefs, we may have Pain, we may have Vexations of various Kinds, to which both Rich and Poor are alike exposed. Or, suppose Poverty to be the harder Lot; let us consider that this Life is but short, and that when Death comes it levels all Distinctions, and leaves no Difference between the King and the Beggar. When the rich Man's *Days are past and his Purposes are broken off; when the Grave is his House, and he shall have made his Bed in the Darknefs; when he shall say to Corruption, thou art my Father and to the Worm, thou art my Mother, and my Sister, where will then be his Hope?*

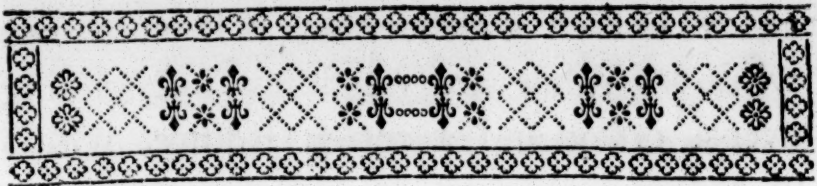
Job

Job xvii. 11--15. No where, but in Him who is the God both of Rich and Poor; and who will not judge of us by the outward Pomp and Splendor in which we have lived, and in which we may die, but by the inward Graces and Ornaments of the Mind, which (as the World goes) outward Circumstances are more likely to destroy than to improve.

Let us bear then this short Space which is allotted us in this Life, with a constant and an equal Mind; looking to that better Hope which is set before us. There is enough in this World to encourage every Man to be industrious in his Calling, and to make him thankful to God if he crowns his Endeavours with Success. But there is not enough to justify our setting our Hearts upon it, and resolving to be rich, as it were, in defiance of God's Providence. When Wealth is not to be come at by honest Means, it is a Notice from Providence, as plain as if we were told it in so many Words, that it is not intended for us: And what do we get by contending with God, and over-leaping the Bounds which he hath set us? If upon other Accounts there were Sense and Decency

cency in such a Behaviour, is it worth our while? What are we doing but gilding over a crazy and a rotten Edifice, which in a few Years, or, it may be, in a few Months or Days, will drop to Pieces, and crush us in its Ruins!



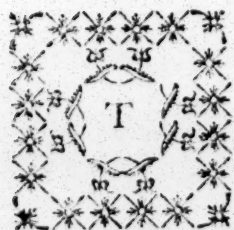


S E R M O N VII.



LUKE xvi. 25.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy Life Time receivedst thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.



THE Story to which this Passage refers, gives us an Account of a Man, happy in this World as Heart could wish, but miserable in the next. Take it in our Saviour's own Words.

There was a certain rich Man, which was clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every Day: And there was a certain Beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his Gate full of Sores; and desiring

firing to be fed with the Crumbs which fell from the rich Man's Table. Moreover, the Dogs came and licked his Sores. And it came to pass, that the Beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom; the rich Man also died, and was buried: And in Hell he lifted up his Eyes, being in Torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham have Mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the Tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue, for I am tormented in this Flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy Life Time receivedst thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, there is a great Gulf fixed between us and you; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

The general Plan of this Parable (for in this Light I consider it) is formed upon the Doctrine of a future State, as it prevailed in the Jewish Church at that Time. It is addressed to the Pharisees, who believed the Resurrection; and therefore

our Saviour does not go about to prove the Doctrine of a future State; but builds upon it as a Truth confessed and acknowledged by themselves. The Jewish Faith (as Josephus has informed us) was this: That "all Souls were immortal; and
 "that under the Earth there are Rewards
 "and Punishments for good and bad Men;
 "that the one are destined to eternal Confinement, whilst the other shall return
 "to Life;" that is, be raised again to Life, "and receive another Body *." This Place under the Earth, to which the Souls of all Men were supposed to pass (the Good to be happy, and the Bad to be miserable) was what they termed Hades, which our Translation renders Hell; very improperly according to the Christian Acceptation. For by Hell we constantly mean the Place of the Damned, in which Place good Men are never supposed to be. But both Bad and Good, according to the Jewish Notion, were in Hades; which was considered by them as one and the same Place, distinguished by different Districts or Apartments.

* De Bello Jud. Lib. 2. C. 8. § 14. Antiq. Lib.
 18. C. 1. § 3.

partments. Take this with you, and the Propriety of the Representation will be visible. The rich Man and Lazarus were both in Hades; the one in his Place of Torment, the other in his Place of Happiness, which is here called Abraham's Bosom; from whence (though at a great Distance from each other) Abraham and the rich Man are represented as communing together. By this our Saviour must be understood as confirming the Jewish Doctrine of a future State in the general Notion of it, viz. as a State of Happiness or Misery for good or bad Men; otherwise it will have no Meaning. But we are not to strain the Comparison so far, as by it to establish every particular Notion which the Jews had about the Nature and Circumstances of a future State: For the Parable (I conceive) was spoken for the Sake of its practical Use only, which, howsoever you explain the Doctrine of a future State, will be just the same. It is with this practical Use alone that I shall concern myself at present; by enquiring into the Ground or Reason of the different States of these two Men; one in a Place of Torment, the other at Rest in Abraham's Bosom.

The first the Text says was *rich*. This alone was not the Thing that determined his State : For is every Man to be condemned merely because he is rich ? God forbid ! The Man was rich : But it is not said he was a Knaïve. Some Men are born to great Estates, and this Man might have been one of that Sort, for ought that the Parable says to the contrary. But whether a Man is born to an Estate, or acquires one by honest Industry, it is, in either Case, the Gift of God ; and what God gives we may, surely, without Offence, possess and enjoy.

Again---*He was clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every Day.* In this likewise, simply considered, there was no Fault ; for this was his Enjoyment. Rich Apparel and a sumptuous Table become large Fortunes, and distinguish a liberal Man from a Niggard. There may be Excess in these Things, and too frequently there is ; but the Parable charges nothing of this Kind. It is not said, that this rich Man was either Glutton or Drunkard, but only that he was clothed richly and fared sumptuously. Nor does it
appear

appear that he wanted Beneficence. Here was a Beggar at his Door, that came to ask Relief; but no Circumstance shews that he used him with Cruelty or Unkindness. *Lazarus was laid at his Gate full of Sores*; and where should such an offensive Object lye, but at his Gate, in the open Air? He *desired to be fed with the Crumbs which fell from the rich Man's Table*; that is with Fragments, or broken Meat. It does not appear but he had what he asked for; and if he had, he had what was fit for him. Who ever places Beggars at his Table, to eat with his Family? *The Dogs came and licked the poor Man's Sores*. This some interpret, as intended to teach us that these brute Creatures had more Bowels of Compassion than their Master; which is not solid. The Dogs followed but their natural Instinct. But this Circumstance very strongly expresses (and I suppose it to be the Reason why it was mentioned) the Misery and Wretchedness of the poor Man's Condition, who was little less than a living Mass of Corruption. His Sores *had not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with Ointment*, Isaiah i. 6. So that upon the whole, here is a

rich Man represented as suffering the Pains of Hell, without any particular Crime laid to his Charge ; and a poor Man, of whom nothing is said but that he was very miserable, represented as sitting in Abraham's Bosom. But some Offence there must have been in the one ; some Merit in the other, or the Justice of God cannot stand. In this World Good and Evil are promiscuously distributed among the Sons of Men. *There is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked ; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not.* Eccles. ix. 2. This is the State of our Probation, in which we are to use and exercise our Virtues : But the next World is the State of Retribution, and There every Work and Device of Man shall meet with its due Reward.

To come at a true Notion of the rich Man's Offence, it will be of use, first of all, to enquire into the poor Man's Merit ; to which the Circumstances of his Case gives us a very plain Direction. That he was very miserable the Story shews, but his Merit could not lie in this : For mere Misery is no more a Foundation of Reward, than mere Happiness is the Foundation of Punishment. The rich Man had

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an Affluence of all Things, and in the Use of them he was happy. This was not his Fault. The poor Man wanted common Neecessaries, and in this was miserable. Neither this, therefore, was his Virtue. Something there must have been in the Mind, Spirit and Conduct of each, in Reference to their respective Conditions, for which the one was approved and the other condemned, as it is in all Cases. For it is not the outward Condition that makes us worthy of Praise or Blame, but the Temper and Spirit with which we bear it.

I would be understood as speaking of those Cases, where our outward Circumstances may be considered as the Act of Providence, and are not of our own choosing. Some Men make themselves poor and miserable, by their own Follies and Vices; in which Case even the Condition itself is imputable as a Fault. But the Parable taxes the poor Man with nothing of this Sort. It is not said that he was idle or extravagant, but only that he was poor and distempered; and the happy Circumstances of his Death evidently suppose, that the Miseries he suffered were of God's sending, not of his own creating;
for

for he would hardly have been set forth to us as a Pattern of Virtue, if the Miseries he suffered had been his Fault. How then does the poor Man behave under his unhappy Condition? Does he seek to supply his Wants by Theft or by Fraud? No, he takes the only lawful Method he had left: He comes to the rich Man's Door and asks Alms. I make no Question, but many who have heard this Story read, have thought themselves justified in the Trade of begging, and exposing their Sores and Maladies in the Streets; and the Plea shall be allowed, when they can shew that they have no other Method of Redress. This poor Man's bodily Distempers, it is to be presumed, had unqualified him to earn his Bread by Labour; steal he would not, and if he must not have begged neither, he must have perished. But had he come to the rich Man's Gate a hail, robust Man, (and many such we see pestering every Corner of this populous Place) instead of being *fed with the Crumbs which fell from the rich Man's Table*, he would have deserved Correction. And even when a Man's bodily Infirmities have disabled him from getting a Livelyhood, he ought

to consider what Provision is made in such Cases by publick Laws. The Parable mentions no Provisions of this Sort, by which this poor Man might find Relief, and it is probable there were none such in those Days. It is but of late that we have had such Provisions among ourselves. But where the Laws of any Country have competently provided for the Relief of poor Men; begging, under such Circumstances (especially when it grows to be a Trade, and Men waste that Time which might usefully be employed in doing something to help themselves) is the next bad Thing to stealing, as, indeed, it frequently ends in it.

We see now the Spirit and Temper of this poor Beggar. He trusted in God, and had an Eye to *the Recompence of Reward*. The Temper of the rich Man (we may therefore presume) was opposite to this. He had great Affluence, but had forgot his Maker: No uncommon Effect of plentiful Circumstances, and uninterrupted Prosperity! There is a great Affinity between this Parable, and that which is set down in the 12th Chapter of this Gospel, * already

* See Serm. 5.

ready explained: And yet they seem to point at two different Characters. For the rich Man in this latter, is plainly characterized as a mere Epicure, *whose God was his Belly*; whose very Soul was fet upon eating and drinking. But of the rich Man in the Parable now under our Consideration, it is only said that he *fared Sumptuously*; which (as I have already observed) does not import that he was either Glutton or Drunkard. He might have had these, and many other Vices; for the Text, though it mentions them not, does not exclude them. Therefore as nothing of this Kind distinctly appears, I shall in the Use and Application of the Parable, follow the Generality under which our Saviour has left it; and my Observation shall be this, that should a Man's moral Behaviour be ever so unexceptionable; yet if his Heart is estranged from God, his Condemnation will be just. Such a Spirit as this comprehends every thing that is bad; and therefore the Psalmist when he would give us the compleat Character of a wicked Man, thus describes him; *The Wicked will not seek after God; God is not in all his Thoughts; thy Judgments are far above out of his Sight.* Psalm x. 4. 5. Such a Man as this, if he
does

does right Things, does nothing upon a right Principle. He may be temperate, he may be just, he may be even kind and beneficent; but whilst all this while God is out of the Question, God has nothing to do with it, unless it be to resent the Wrong, and punish the evil Doer. It may be Constitution; it may be Policy; it may be Humanity; it may be what you please; it is not Religion. And what is it but Religion that can recommend us to God? When a Man out of Conscience towards God denies himself unlawful Things, or does well by his Neighbour, it is Religion towards God, and God will place such Virtue to his Account. But when he acquits himself well to the World, without View or Regard to God; to the World he sacrificeth, and from the World he is to look for his Reward. *Them that honour me (says God) I will Honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 30. The Meaning is, that all such are under the Sentence of God, destined to Wrath and Condemnation; and with great Justice, unless you will say, that though there is a Respect due to every Creature upon Earth, God, the Maker of all, may be despised with Impunity. If every good Thing we enjoy

joy is his Gift, natural Justice requires that he in the first Place should be honoured as our Benefactor. Gratitude is due to every Man who serves under him as an Instrument for our Good ; to our Parents, to our Relations and Friends, to all by whose good Offices we have in any Way been pleased or profited : Much more then must it be due to the first Cause of all, from whom these Instruments have received the very Capacity to serve us. And how shall we shew our Gratitude to Him ? He cannot be benefited again by us, as one Man may be profited by another. All we have to offer him, is the Tribute of a thankful Mind ; which is seen when we have him frequently in our Thoughts, and direct all our Actions, as a Homage paid to him. When we reverence him in his Word and in his Ordinances, and in every Part of our Conversation behave as under the Inspection of his Providence, and as accountable to his Justice. This is that Love and Fear of God which constitutes true Religion, and which stamps a Value upon all Duties of the Moral Kind to make them avail us in the Day of Judgment. The rich Man in the Parable seems to have wanted this governing Principle.

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He *looked at the Things that are seen*; of *the Things that are not seen* he had no Thought or Conception. And this was ground enough for his Condemnation; for this will be the Destruction of all who when they eat and are satisfied, render not unto God the Glory.

We see then at last, where the Sting of Abraham's Reprimand properly lies; *Son, remember that thou in thy Life Time receivedst thy good Things*. It is not that because he had been bountifully provided in this World, therefore he was to fare ill in the next; but because he had received good Things with an unthankful Mind. And let us remember that we are all of us concerned in this Lesson, as well as the Rich; for we all of us receive enough of the good Things of this Life to have Cause to be thankful. But we see likewise that what gives Merit to Poverty, is Patience and Trust in God, which disdains all Helps but what come from him in the Way of Duty. Some Men seem to have no other Notion of Heaven, than as of an Hospital, where the Rich are to be excluded, and the Poor admitted of Course. But as the Rich will have the very first Title if they behave properly;

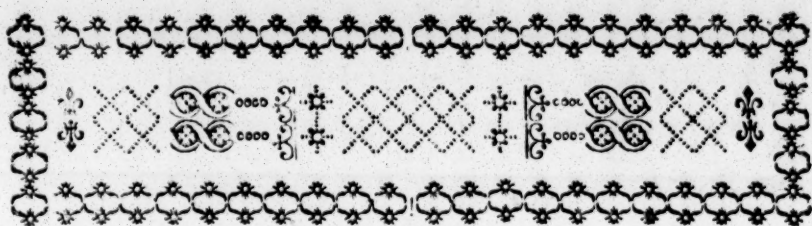
perly; so poor Men, if they would secure their Privilege, must take Care to be honest and industrious as well as Poor. This was Lazarus's Case; who had he been a Thief, or an idle, disorderly Man, might have died poor enough, (as such Wretches commonly do) but you would never have heard of him in Abraham's Bosom.

I cannot conclude this Discourse, without taking Notice of the latter Part of the Parable, in which the rich Man, having asked what he thought fit for himself, and been denied, puts up a Request in behalf of his Brethren. *I pray thee, Father [Abraham] send him [Lazarus] to my Father's House; for I have five Brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this Place of Torment.* But what says Abraham? *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* This shews two Things; 1. That the Doctrine of a future State of Rewards and Punishments for good and bad Men, was held forth by Moses and the Prophets. For what was it that Lazarus was to have testified, supposing he had been sent? No doubt he was to have testified what he knew concerning

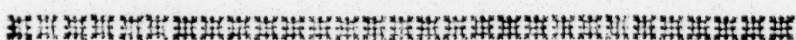
cerning his own happy, and the rich Man's miserable Estate in the other World. To what other Purpose could he have been sent; or what could he have testified but this? The End of his Testimony is declared to be, *lest they also should come into that Place of Torment*. It seems that the rich Man's Brethren were the same Sort of careless Livers that he had been himself: Worldly Men, that would not give themselves leisure to think upon a future State, and therefore he was desirous, that Lazarus should be sent to put them in Mind of it. To which Abraham answers, *they have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them*. As if he had said; "What need can there be to send Lazarus, to bear this Testimony, when they are forewarned already by Moses and the Prophets?" Of what did Moses and the Prophets forewarn them? Of the very Thing surely which he desired that Lazarus might be sent to testify; for otherwise the Answer will be impertinent. We may observe 2dly. That the Notices given of a future State by Moses and the Prophets, were such as that the Jews were bound to attend to them at their Peril;

for otherwise these Notices would not have been a just Reason for their Condemnation, nor have superseded the Necessity of farther Warning. The Answer of the rich Man does not deny this, but rather acknowledges it. *Nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent.* He does not, I say, deny that Moses and the Prophets had given sufficient warning; for then he must have denied the Justice of his own Condemnation (against which he does not so much as open his Mouth) but it is as if he had said; “ true, Father Abraham. Moses
“ and the Prophets have given warning;
“ but if one goes from the dead, will it not
“ be still better? Will they not pay more
“ regard to such a Testimony as this?” To which Abraham replies; *if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead.* The meaning of which is not to say, that no Light could be added to what Moses and the Prophets had taught, concerning a future State; but that the same Obstinacy, and Carelessness of Spirit, which hindered the present Means from having their due Effect, would also obstruct any further Means
which

which God might please to vouchsafe them; which was fully verified by the Conduct of the Jewish Nation in Respect of Christ's Ministry, who, though he *arose from the Dead*, and came to them to open the Doctrine of a future State more perfectly than Moses and the Prophets had done, yet came to them in vain. This shews how easily Men impose upon themselves in calling for farther Means, when they have already Means sufficient before them, and will not make Use of them. We have the like Complaints among ourselves. Many will not attend to Christ and his Doctrine, who fancy they should do so if the Evidence were of their own chusing. But if they had what they are ready to demand, it is more than probable that they would be never the better for it. And therefore let us all take Heed to ourselves, and accepting what God has given with Thankfulness, employ it to the best Advantage; which if we do, it will make us wise to Salvation: But which if we neglect, it will rise up in Judgment against us at the last Day, to our everlasting Shame and Confusion.

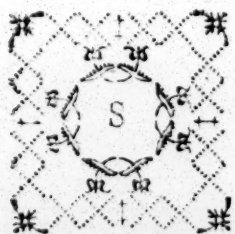


S E R M O N VIII.



I CORINTHIANS vii. 24.

*Brethren, let every Man wherein he is called
therein abide with God.*



T. Paul's Intention in this Part of his Epistle, was to shew the Christians of those Times, who had lately been converted from Heathenism, that the Change which they had made in their Religion, made no Change in the natural Relations they were under, nor would exempt them from the Duties that were proper to such Relations. He puts the Case first as it lies between Man and Wife, Verse 13. *The Woman which hath an Husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* The Reason is, because the Woman being naturally

naturally bound by the Law to her Husband; the Gospel, which makes no Change in the natural Law, leaves her so still. The Case is the same as to Masters and Servants, as it follows Verse 21. *Art thou called*, (that is, dost thou believe in Christ or dost thou become a Disciple of Christ,) *being a Servant?* *Care not for it,----for he that is called in the Lord, being a Servant, is the Lord's Free-man.* Free as to Christ or in Spiritual Things, but in respect of his Master he is a Servant still, and so must abide, unless his Master be willing to make him free, as the intermediate Words necessarily imply. *If thou mayest be made free* (that is, if thy Heathen Master will consent to make the free) *use it rather.* It is so in all Cases, and under all Relations; for at Verse 17. the Apostle gives it as a general Rule, *as God hath distributed to every Man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk, and so ordain I in all the Churches.* The Variety of Stations, under which different Men are placed in this World, is here considered as the Work of Providence, who allots to every Man his Portion of good Things, according to his Sovereign Will and Plea-

sure. This is the meaning of the Phrase, *as God hath distributed to every Man*; that is, as his Lot and Condition is, *so let him walk*. Whatever be the Station in which the Gospel finds him, let him discharge the Duties of it; for *as the Lord hath called every one, so he is to walk*; which shews that being under or not under the Gospel, makes no Difference in this Case. And this comes up to what is laid down in the Text; *Brethren let every Man wherein he is called, therein abide*; that is, in that State or Condition in which he was before he accepted the Gospel, in the same State let him abide, when he is become a Christian; which may be the meaning of the Phrase *with God*; for when they were in a State of Heathenism, they are spoken of by the same Apostle, as having been *without God*; Eph. ii. 11, 12. *Wherefore remember that ye being in Time passed Gentiles,----that at that Time ye were----without God.----But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ*. Or when the Apostle says, that they should abide in the several Stations wherein they were called *with God*; his Meaning might be, that they should behave

behave in them, as under the all-seeing Eye of God, considering him as always present, to be a Witness and a Judge, of their well or evil Doings; to teach them that they should observe a Conscience in these Things, *not as pleasing Men, but as pleasing God.*

Having said thus much to shew the meaning of the Text; I shall raise this general Doctrine from it, to be the Subject of my present Discourse, viz. That every Man has his Station assigned him by Providence in this World, the Duties of which he is bound to fulfil, by the Law of Nature, and by the Law of Christ. The Distinctions between Men and Men are greatly various, and the Duties arising from those Distinctions of large Extent. The most general, which takes in the greatest Numbers, is that which lies between Rich and Poor, and to this I mean to confine myself at present. There are Duties proper to a high Condition: There are also Duties proper to those in low Estate. When these are discharged as they ought to be, each Man may be said to abide in his proper Calling; each to fill up his proper Character in Life.

The Nature of this Distinction (as indeed of most others) is such, that to those who will consider it carefully, it points out their Duty as plainly as any written Law can do. As to the Rich, St. Paul tells us that they should be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* 1 Tim. vi. 18. And does not common Sense speak this as plainly as He? If all were rich, there would be no Call for Distribution. For to what End should I give to another who has enough of his own, to supply his own Occasions? But since God has made some Rich and others Poor; since some have too little, and others more than a Sufficiency; it is as natural to see that Beneficence and Charity must be Duties proper to the Station of the Rich, as it is reasonable to believe that the Providence of God never intended that some should be provided with Superfluities, whilst others are left destitute of the common Necessaries of Life. Liberality is as suitable to the Character of a rich Man, as Courage and Bravery is to that of a Soldier, or Honesty and Fidelity to that of a Steward. Why does the Soldier fight, but because he receives his Country's Pay? Why

Why does the Servant do his Master's Work, but because he receives his Master's Wages? There is a Trust in these Cases; and there is a Trust in the other too. For Riches are a Trust; and when God has given us all we want, it becomes a natural Obligation upon us to administer out of that which is more than what we want to the Relief of our indigent and necessitous Fellow-Creatures.

That God intended an Inequality in the Conditions of Men there can be no Question; yet still he intended a Sustenance for all. The Poor are not to be maintained like the Rich; but they are to be maintained in a Manner suitable to their Condition; and this, out of the Bounty of the Rich, if their own Endeavours fail. To suppose that God intended otherwise, and that whilst the Rich surfeit in their Abundance, the Poor should be left to perish; (besides that it would be taxing him with partial Dealing) were to give just such an Image of the Creator of the Universe, as would be that of a Master-Builder, who should bestow great Cost in beautifying and adorning his House, and at the same Time should

should neglect to secure the Corner Stone, which if it fails, the Fabrick must fall.

It is not without Cause that I here consider the Poor as the Strength and Basis of human Society. They are so beyond all Doubt if they will do their Duties; and what the Duty of poor Men is, their Station likewise very plainly shews. As the Abundance of the Rich directs them to Liberality, so the Necessities of the Poor direct them to honest Industry; which is the first natural Way of supplying those Necessities, and which alone can entitle them to expect Relief from others. Wealth is the Offspring of Industry: For what will the Earth, which is given for our common Sustenance, yield without Culture? Or what is the Produce of the Earth without Manufactures to convert those Materials which the Earth brings forth, into Instruments serving to the Uses of Life? All this implies Labour; but in whom? Why in the Poor, not in the Rich who by their Condition stand exempted from Labour. The poor Man does his Work, for which he has a Maintenance by the Wages he receives; but the greatest Advantage of the poor Man's Industry redounds to the Rich.

This

This is the State of the World ; which shews the Reason of what I said just now, that the Poor are the Corner Stone of Society ; and hard as the Lot of poor Men may seem to be, they must be contented to take it, for it is of God's Appointment.

In the mean Time this plainly shews the natural Alliance, that there is between the Rich and the Poor ; and how necessary it is towards carrying on the Ends of Providence, that each acquits himself in a Manner suitable to his Condition. If poor Men are idle and will not Work, they desert their Station ; and Charity becomes a very improper Way of relieving their Wants. For, besides that it is very unreasonable for a Man to expect that Relief from another, which he has already in his own Hands : It is plain that in Proportion as Industry fails, the very Means of Charity must fail with it. What the rich Man gives, he gives out of his Abundance ; and how long would his Abundance last, if he should have neither Labourers to till the Ground, nor Servants to do his Work, nor Manufacturers to receive his Commodities in Exchange for Money ?

If

If poor Men steal to supply their Wants, this is yet a worse Evil: For he that steals denies all Property; and when all Property is destroyed, Life, or the Comforts of living, will be at an End. When a Man asks your Charity, he refers himself to your Discretion; and if he is content with what you give, you will not be hurt. But when he steals, he takes upon himself to be his own Carver, and you are at His Mercy, which is always cruel. To prevent such Mischief (so utterly subversive of all Society) the Rich should take Care not only to discourage Idleness in poor Men (which is the common Inlet to Stealing) but also that no deserving Object be left destitute of seasonable and proper Relief. For though Stealing is generally the Effect of a profligate, abandoned Mind; it is sometimes the Child of pitiable Necessity, which tempts Men to do what they condemn, and would otherwise abhor. Hunger, and Cold, and Nakedness, are hard and cruel Things; and though an honest Mind will bear a great deal of them before it consents to dishonest Means of Relief; there are yet very few who have Virtue enough to starve. Perhaps it is no Point
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of Virtue, when Charity is denied, and Industry fails ; for all have a Right to live ; by their own Industry if they can ; if not, by the charitable Help and Assistance of others.

To you that are poor then, let me give this plain and friendly Advice. If you want Charity, take Care to deserve it. Let honest Industry, and sober Frugality lead the Way ; and doubt not but that God will raise you up Friends to supply what is yet lacking. Let no Temptation prevail upon you to steal. This is putting yourselves from the Protection of God and the Compassion of Men. The Law has thus far directed Charity, that no industrious Man shall want a Livelyhood ; and for the rest, you had better submit to any Hardship than have Recourse to those hazardous Expedients which may probably bring you to the Gallows.

Next to the Use of violent and forcible Methods, there is nothing which so justly raises the Indignation of Mankind, as to see Those clamorous for Relief, who shew by their Behaviour that they have not a Heart to be thankful. The Intention of Providence in making us to be dependent
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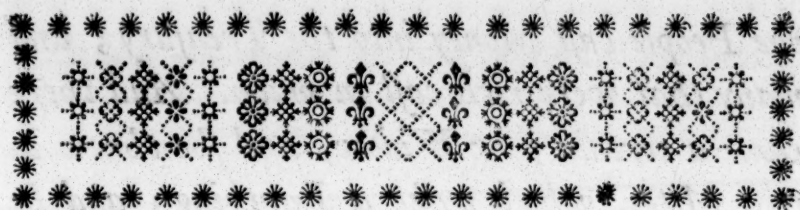
one upon another, was to bind us together by mutual Affection. The rich Man gives his Money in Supply of the poor Man's Needs, to be repaid by him with Kindness and Esteem: And when every good Office meets with its proper Return, it produces that Harmony and good Understanding between Neighbours, which is the very Life and Soul of Society. Humility, Modesty, and a decent and respectful Behaviour, are great Softeners of the Hearts of Men. To be assuming, to be insolent, to be noisy and tumultuous, are Things which give universal Disgust. This is not to ask Charity but to demand it; and when what the rich Man gives, the poor Man receives, not as a Gift, but as a Debt, he is not to look for any Thanks for his Pains.

To the Rich I have little to say, being perswaded that where there are Abilities, there will be also a Readiness, when proper Occasions call for Charity. It is commonly said that Charity is cold; and poor Men are for the most Part forward enough in censuring their rich Neighbours as lacking Charity, when Supplies do not come in so fast as they wish. But when poor Men find themselves disposed to murmur, it
would

would well become them to look a little into their own Conduct, and see if they are not chargeable with something which disqualifies them for the Charity of their Neighbours. They may be in want; but they may be lazy; they may be Sots; and with what Face can such as these tax their Neighbours with Want of Charity? Let these Faults be first mended among the Poor; and I greatly mistake, or they will find their rich Neighbours willing enough to help them in their real Wants. Common Humanity strongly pleads the poor Man's Cause; for he must have a Heart of Stone who can see his Neighbour famish before his Eyes, when he himself has enough and to spare. Religion pleads yet stronger: For who can read those Words of Christ, without Fear and Trembling, *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred and ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in Prison and ye visited me not.* ----- *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my Brethren ye did it not to me, Matt. xxv. 41, &c.* You see here that Christ makes the
 poor

poor Man's Cause his own; and interprets every hard-hearted Action done to his Brethren, as done to himself. A strong Argument for Charity, where Charity may be properly exercised! But who are they whom Christ here calls his Brethren? Who is the poor Man whom Christ places in his stead?----Not the Idle, and the Disorderly; not the Licentious and the Profane; not the Unruly and the Disobedient; not the Whoremonger, the Glutton, or the Drunkard;-----But the sober, the honest, the painful, the meek, and the quiet Christian; such are the Brethren of Christ! These are they whose Cause he will support! And these (let me add) are they to whom every good Man will lend a willing Ear. For the Cries of Distress pierce with irresistible Force, when they are armed with the Virtues of the Miserable. God grant that we may be all of us thus minded; that whether rich or poor we may, each in our respective Stations, so behave as to acquit ourselves to His Judgment, before whose great and awful Tribunal we must all stand, and from whom both Rich and Poor will receive their Reward.

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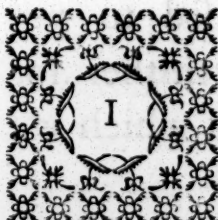


S E R M O N IX.



MARK xii. 44.

*For all they did cast in of their Abundance :
But she of her Want did cast in all that she
had.*

N the foregoing Part of this Chapter, our Saviour gives his Disciples a Caution against the Scribes, whom he taxes with Pride and Hypocrisy. They loved to go in long Cloathing, and loved Salutations in the Market Places ; and the chief Seats in the Synagogues, and the uppermost Rooms at Feasts. This was their Pride. They devoured Widows Houses, and for a Pretence made long Prayers. This was their Hypocrisy.

The History goes on and observes, that whilst Jesus was saying these Things, he sat over against the Treasury, and beheld how

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the People cast Money into the Treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor Widow, and she threw in two Mites, which make a Farthing; and he called unto him his Disciples, and saith unto them, verily I say unto you, that this poor Widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the Treasury: For all they did cast in of their Abundance; but she of her Want did cast in all that she had, even all her Living.

What is here called *the Treasury*, might have been called the Poor's Box: For it was a small Coffer that stood in the Temple, into which the People used to put their Alms when they resorted thither for their publick Devotions. From which we may observe two Things.

1. The close Connection between Almsgiving and the Duties of religious Worship. The Scripture frequently joins them together, as Acts x. 4, where Peter says to Cornelius, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.* See Isaiah lviii. 6. Almsgiving is truly an Act of Worship; an Offering to God: *For he that giveth to the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord,* Prov. xix. 17. To fast or to pray, or to give,
Thanks,

Thanks, without giving Alms, is being wanting in one and (as we ought to add) the most material Instance of Worship. God hath no Need of our Prayers, or of our Fastings, or of our Thanks; but he hath Need of our Alms; that is, the Poor have Need of them; and in Their Place He is pleased to put Himself, as our Saviour hath represented the Case, Matt. xxv. 40. *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me.* In this Point the Scribes were greatly defective. They made long Prayers; but the Rest of their Conduct shewed this to be but a Pretence. For had they flowed from a true Spirit of Piety, this Spirit would have been seen in their Charity as well as in their Prayers. But far from charitable they were not so much as just. Instead of giving to the Poor, they *devoured Widows Houses*. Therefore our Saviour adds---*they shall receive greater Damnation*. We may learn

2. That Alms-giving is not a Work of that Kind that it ought always to be done in private. It was in the Temple that the People cast Money into the Treasury, in the Sight of all that resorted thither; and it

was with Reason, that this was appointed as a Place for receiving Gifts ; that every one that did a good Work might be the Author of a good Example to his Neighbour. Our Saviour indeed bids us to *take heed that we do not our Alms before Men to be seen of them* : But this is not saying, that we should never be seen doing a charitable Action ; but that we should not do Alms upon a Principle of Ostentation and vain Glory. Let us but take Care that the Motive of giving be as it ought to be, and it matters not how many see us. Our Charity will not be the worse for this, but the better ; because attended with a more beneficial Influence. There is certainly no more Harm in doing Alms in publick, than there is in praying in publick ; and as they are Branches of the same Worship, the same Season and Circumstances of Notoriety that are proper for the one, will be as proper also for the other.

Let us now go on with the Story, and our Saviour's Observations upon it ; and see what farther Instructions will arise to direct us in the due Discharge of this Duty.

Many that were rich cast in much ; which shews, that it will not suffice barely to give
Alms

Alms, unless we give in some Measure proportionable to our Abilities. So St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. *Charge them that are rich in this World---that they be rich in good Works*; that is, that their Beneficence abounds in Proportion as their Wealth abounds. Our Saviour bestows no Commendation upon the Rich that they gave much; because they had much to give. How would he have blamed them, if they had given no more than the poor Widow! What this Proportion is, the Law of God hath no where defined; and it is this very Circumstance which gives to Alms-giving all its Value. For had God said precisely how much every Man should give to the Poor (as suppose, a tenth, a twentieth, or a thirtieth Part of what he is worth) the Share thus allotted to the Poor, would not have come under the Notion of a free Gift, but of a Debt strictly due; and there would be no more Merit in relieving a poor Man in Want, than there is in paying him his Wages when he has done his Work. For God being Sovereign Lord of all, has a Right to dispose of the good Things of this World to whomsoever he pleases; and to defraud another of the Portion assigned

him by his exprefs Authority, is direct Injustice.

But this Circumftance, which fets the Value upon Gifts of Charity, is too often made a Handle for the Neglect of this Duty, or an Excufe for doing it in too fparing a Manner. For every Man being left to judge of his own Abilities, a narrow Mind will eafily fatisfy itfelf that it hath done what is fufficient. But to open our Hearts a little in fuch Cafes, we fhould confider, that free Gift (or Service equivalent to Gift) is the only Duty by which we can give the proper Evidence of our Love to Mankind. He that pays a juft Debt, does no more than the Law will compel him to do; or if it will not, to be barely juft, is not to be benevolent. A Man may be juft (that is, he may do juft Things) out of a Regard to Himfelf, becaufe he expects to be juftly dealt with in his Turn, and it is not fafe to tranfact upon other Terms. But when a rich Man, who is in no Hazard of ftanding in need of another's Charity, liberally adminifters to the Wants of others, merely for the Sake of doing good: That is true Benevolence; and this is the Reason why the Gofpel lays fuch
great

great Strefs upon this Duty; for mutual Benevolence is the great Cement of human Society, and the Security of every social Virtue. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Matt. xxii. 37. To the same Purpose St. Paul, *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law; for this, thou shalt not commit Adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false Witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour; therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* Rom. xiii. 8---10.

Seeing then that Benevolence holds so high a Place in the Scale of Virtue, it of all Things concerns us most, not to be wanting in that Duty, which is the proper Evidence of it; and it is just as unnatural to a benevolent Mind to give below its Abilities as not to give at all. If whilst I have but little I give a little; the same

Goodness, if I had much, would prompt me to give much. When a rich Man gives penuriously, it shews that he does not like the Work, but would gladly be excused if he could: But Charity must be done with a willing Mind, otherwise it is not Charity. Without this Spirit, the greatest Benefactions, howsoever they may profit those who partake of them, will be of no Avail to us in the Sight of God; and with it the smallest Gift will be accepted: For as the Apostle speaks, *If there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, not according to that he hath not.* 2 Cor. viii. 12. This is illustrated by what follows in the Story. For,

There came a certain poor Widow, and she threw in two Mites, which make a Farthing. There are two Circumstances mentioned concerning this Woman. In the first Place she was poor: In the next, she was a Widow; which shews that she was helpless too. How poor she was we may learn from hence, that these two Mites, this Farthing, which she threw into the Treasury, was *all her Living*; all that she had for her present Maintenance. This poor Woman lived (as we say) from Hand to Mouth.

She

She had but one Farthing left from her own necessary Uses; and this she gave away to the Poor, trusting to the good Providence of God to supply her future Wants. From whence these following Lessons of Instruction will arise, viz.

1. That scarce any Man is so poor, but that something may be expected to be done by him in Works of Charity. For had this Woman done a foolish, imprudent Thing, our Saviour would not have commended her. To provide first for our own necessary Occasions, is the first and great Law of Nature. I am not to give that Bread to another, which is necessary to satisfy my own Hunger; nor that Cloathing which is necessary to keep me warm. But out of every Superfluity, something is due to the Poor; and That is to be reckoned as a Superfluity, which exceeds the necessary Demands of Life. Nor doth this hinder but that we may allow ourselves in the Use of Conveniencies, as our Circumstances increase. We are to give out of our Superfluities; we are not bound to give away all our Superfluities. This Woman gave away all she had, because the very lowest Gift was her all.

If

If she had had more, it is likely she would not have given her all. But as the lowest Gift was her all, she chose to leave herself destitute, rather than not to give; which was an Instance of a great and a noble Spirit; and as such it is recommended to us by our Saviour: For I do not suppose his Intention was to give it as a general Precept, that if a Man has but a single Farthing left, he should give it away to the Poor. Charity is a discretionary Thing, and in the Nature of it, will not admit of being tied down by fixed and settled Rules. But by telling us what this poor Woman did, his Meaning was to shew us, how we ought to be disposed in like Cases; and that if we are Poor, we should be more ready to trust God's Providence for our future Support, than forward to excuse ourselves from giving out of our little Stock, when proper Occasions of Charity offer themselves. Had this Woman been of a niggardly Temper, she might have said, "I want not this Farthing to-day; but
" who shall answer that I may not want it
" to-morrow;" which is a very common Excuse in the Mouths of uncharitable Men. But her Trust was in God; and if

ours

ours be so too, we shall act in like Manner. We shall give according to our present Circumstances, and as our Circumstances improve, our Liberality will encrease with them. So said good old Tobit, to his Son. *Give Alms of thy Substance.--- If thou hast Abundance, give Alms accordingly. If thou hast but little, be not afraid to give according to that little. For thou layest up a good Treasure for thyself against the Day of Necessity.* Tob. iv. 7, 8. That is, “ thou wilt make to thyself “ Friends, when thou thyself shalt be in “ Distress. Man will love thee and God “ will bless thee.”

As Wealth is the natural Fruit of Industry, so by the wise Appointment of God, it is the Fruit of Liberality too. *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.* Prov. xi. 25. We must understand this, as we are to understand all God's Promises, relating to the Things of this World; that is as liable to Exceptions arising from other Views of Providence. But upon the general Reason of the Case, there is a Fitness and Propriety in this Way of proceeding. For whom would an earthly Master *make ruler*
over

*over his Household, to give them their Portion of Meat in due Season; the Man that is prudent and humane, and will see that every one has right done him; or the penurious Wretch who will gather all to himself, and starve the rest of his Servants? Worldly-minded Men will not easily be brought to understand this. When they drudge on and fare hardly; when they scrape up every Thing within their Reach, and find they can but just live; they are apt to conclude, that should they open their Hands to give, they would presently be undone. No Wonder they judge after this Manner. For these Men *walk not by Faith but by Sight*, and they cannot discern that secret Hand which directs, and determines the final Event of Things; which pulleth down some, and lifteth up others, as to infinite Wisdom seemeth best. They trust to their little Hoard, and think that by close Management, and being jealous over every Penny, they shall swell it up into a large Heap; but they see not the hidden Curse, which like a Moth is eating it up, and will make fruitless all their Care and Toil!*

But

But there is another Sort of Conduct in poor Men, (for to such I am still speaking) which not less disqualifies them for Acts of Charity, than Sordidness; and that is Intemperance and Excess. Had this poor Woman been a Glutton or a Sot, it is probable that she would neither have come to the Temple to worship, nor have thrown her two Mites into the Treasury. She would have found other Uses for them. But as she had ordinarily no more than what was sufficient to furnish herself with Necessaries, so she was content with Necessaries; and chose rather to employ this small Surplus in doing an Act acceptable to God, than in gratifying her Appetites. If poor Men are not endued with this Spirit, but will spend to the utmost Extent of what they earn (as they very easily may) it is certain they will never be at leisure to do a good Thing. But are they therefore excused? By no Means. For what saith St. Paul? *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Eph. iv. 28. It is but too common a Thing for poor Men by their Excesses, to
be

be driven to steal: A Fault which nobody I suppose, will pretend to excuse. But many seem to be of Opinion, that if they work hard for what they have, and come by it honestly, they have a right to take the whole good of it to themselves; especially if they keep within the Bounds of Sobriety. But St. Paul reads them another Lesson, and says that they are to labour that they may have as well wherewith to give as what to spend. And common Sense speaks the same Thing. For if poor Men may spend all upon themselves, why may not rich Men do so too? And what then would become of Charity? There is scarce any Man so rich, but that he may spend all upon himself, if he is so disposed. He cannot eat more, he cannot drink more, than his poor Neighbour. But he may live more delicately, he may fare more sumptuously; he may spend so much in State, and Pomp, and Equipage, that nothing shall be left to be disposed of in Works of Charity. Poor Men are very apt to censure the Rich, when they do these Things; and with great Reason: But they do not enough consider that they are guilty of the same Fault themselves

selves, when they disable themselves by Indulgences of any Kind that are not suited to their Rank and Condition. The reasonable Way therefore (as I said before) is for every Man, whether rich or poor, to take Care to have something to spare, and to give in Proportion to his Circumstances, be it ever so little. And to this, the next Observation will give us the greatest Encouragement; which is, that,

2. The least we can give, if it be according to our Abilities, will be as well accepted, as if, being better able, we had given more. This poor Woman gave but a Farthing; and yet what does our Saviour say of her? *Verily I say unto you, that this poor Widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the Treasury.* How did she cast in more? The Gift only considered, she cast in nothing, or what was next to nothing. But her Circumstances considered, she did a greater Thing than all of them. For they cast in but a Share out of their Abundance; but she cast in all that she had. The Poor considered, she cast in less; Herself considered, she cast in more; that is, she did a greater and more noble Act of Charity; a Charity more acceptable
to

to God, than theirs. The Reason of this is; that God measureth our Charity, not by the Gift, but by the Disposition of Mind with which we give; and it is for our Charity, not for the Gift, that we shall be rewarded. Doth God want Bread to feed the Hungry, or Raiment to cover the Naked? He hath the whole Creation in his Hand, and can do it without asking our Leave or Assistance. *He cloatheth the Lillies of the Field; he feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him,* without asking any Help from Man. But Man he would have provided for by the Help of Man, that he might knit us together in brother-like Affection. And therefore it is that the Will, the benevolent Mind, is accepted; because there is every Thing in it that is meant and intended by Charity. And certainly there is more Benevolence in giving a little out of a little, than in giving much out of much. For he that giveth much out of much, may have yet a great deal to spare. He may give to the Poor without being sensible of the Want of it himself. But when a poor Man gives out of his small Stock, he feels what he gives, and must abridge himself, in some Satisfaction or
other

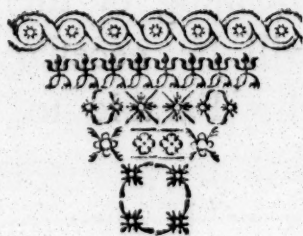
other in which he might otherwise have indulged himself. This is the Merit of a poor Man's Charity, and what gave the Widow's two Mites a superior Value in God's Estimation to the large Offerings of the Rich and Great. And would rich Men have the same Merit to plead, they must act with the same Spirit. Their Alms should not be the mere Refuse of an unbounded Indulgence. There should be some Self-denial in doing Good; some sparing from ones self; nor should they *offer unto God that only which costs them nothing.*

And let Rich and Poor consider how wisely they act for themselves, when they thus dispense the good Things of this World wherewith God hath blessed them. What does a Man get by hoarding up Wealth, but a wretched Store that can nothing profit him? Or what, by launching out into all the Vanities and Extravagancies of Life, but a short-lived Pleasure, which is dying every Hour, and which if it lasts this Life, cannot leave so much as one comfortable Reflection to think upon? But our good Deeds are a Treasure to Eternity. That will remain when *the Fashion of this World shall be passed away*, and all its Plea-

tures shall lie buried with us in the Grave. *I say unto you, (says our Saviour) make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.* Luke xvi. 9. Again, Chap. xii. vers. 33. *Sell that ye have and give Alms; provide for yourselves Bags which wax not old; a Treasure in the Heavens which faileth not, where no Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth.* Let us not then be weary, or backward in well doing, knowing that in due Season we shall reap if we faint not. Gal. vi. 9. To be liberal, according to our Abilities, is no ill Management, this World only considered. Bad Men (as I have before observed) look upon all that is given in Charity to be lost; and for what the Poor can or will do for us in the Way of Recompence, it may be like casting Bread into the Sea, which turns to no Account. But Solomon tells us, that if we thus *cast our Bread upon the Waters, it shall return to us again.* Eccles. xi. 1. The Poor cannot recompence us; but God will repay us what we give, either by the Encrease of Blessings in this Life; (which often falls out) or if, for Reasons of his
Pro-

Providence, he sees fit to keep charitable Men poor, they shall have their *Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just*. Luke xiv.

14. And what a gainful Bargain will it be thus to exchange these earthly Things for heavenly! To part with our Silver and our Gold, not to purchase Houses or Lands, which we must very quickly leave ; but to secure to ourselves a better and more enduring Substance in the everlasting Kingdom of God!



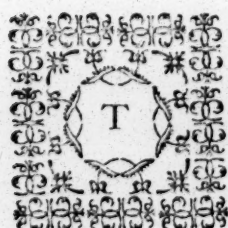


S E R M O N X.



MATTHEW xviii. 35.

So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you; if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.



O shew the full Weight and Meaning of these Words, it will be necessary to explain the Parable to which they refer.

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a certain King which would take Account of his Servants; and when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand Talents; but forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his Wife and Children,

Children, and all that he had, and Payment to be made. The Servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord! have Patience with me and I will pay the all. Then the Lord of that Servant was moved with Compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the Debt. But the same Servant went out, and found one of his Fellow-Servants which owed him an Hundred Pence: And he laid Hands on him, and took him by the Throat saying, pay me that thou owest. And his Fellow-Servant fell down at his Feet, and besought him, saying, have Patience with me and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into Prison till he should pay the Debt.-----Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him; O thou wicked Servant! I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldst not thou also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had Pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every Man his Brother their Trespases.

It is evident at first Sight, that the general Scope of this Parable is to recommend to us the great Duty of Forgiveness; of which the King who called his Servants to Account, is set forth to us as a Pattern for our Imitation. How far the Example goes, and to what Points of Conduct it may properly be applied, it shall be my Business to shew, and a due Attention to the several Circumstances of the Parable will easily inform us. But before I enter upon this I must make two general Observations.

The first is, that the King in the Parable, is the Example of a Man acting in his own private Concerns, not in the Execution of any publick Trust. Those of whom he would *take Account* were *his Servants*; and the Matter in Question, was a Matter of private Property, not of publick Right. The Matter of the Parable being therefore thus confined, the Doctrine it contains must fall under the same Limitation, and can be a Direction to private Men only, in their own Concerns, not to the Ministers of publick Justice, in Points which affect the common Utility. The King forgave his Servant, because he desired

fired it. Must the Magistrate therefore forgive every Transgressor against the Laws, because he desires it. Are his Hands tied up from punishing Evil Doers? This would be a very wrong Inference. The Parable hath nothing to do in such Matters as these. A Man may do what he will with his own. He may exact a Debt, or he may forgive it, without being responsible to any Body why he does so. But he that accepts a publick Trust, becomes a Debtor to the Publick, to which he is answerable for the due Execution of it; and therefore in these Cases, when Compassion interposes to defeat the Law, it acts out of its proper Sphere, and grows to be an Act of publick Injustice. I would not be understood to say, that there are no Cases in which the Magistrate may shew Compassion. There are Cases, where the Laws of Society, (that is, the publick Judgment) both allow and recommend it; and where there is Power to decide upon such Cases, and to make Abatements of the Rigour of the Law in Favour of Offenders, there Mercy may properly be shewn. This is not to defeat the Law, but to fulfil the Law. But even in these

Cases, such Persons should consider themselves as executing a Trust, and act with an honest Regard to the Publick Good, not with the same Freedom and Indifference, with which their good Nature would, possibly, lead them to act, if it were a Matter in which their own private Right and Interest were singly concerned.

Secondly. It is very easy to see, that the King in the Parable is set forth to us as the Image of God, the supreme Lord and Governor of the World. But in what Capacity are we to consider him? Not surely as our Judge at the last Day; when we are assured he will not forgive all Offences, but shew Justice to all Mankind, in rewarding the Good and punishing the Bad. In this View he will stand in the same Light with the Civil Magistrate: For though God is Lord of all, and cannot therefore receive a Trust from any; he may take a Character upon himself; and when he has done so, Reason requires us to think that he will act consistently. When therefore he has told us that he will *judge both the Quick and the Dead*, and that he will *reward every Man according to his Works*; we must believe

believe him in what he says, nor are we to form to ourselves any Hopes from this Parable, that he will not be true and punctual to his Word. But in what Capacity then are we to consider him, so as to make the Parable applicable to the Ways of his Providence? Why as a common Father to the whole Human Race; inviting them to Pardon and Salvation by the free Offers of his Grace in Christ, when they were lost by Sin beyond all Hopes of Recovery, by any Means of their own seeking. Consider God in this Light, and you see the Antitype, to which the Picture represented in the Parable exactly corresponds. A King acting in his own private Property; calling his own Servants to Account; and forgiving a Debt of an immense Sum, upon no other Motive than his own free Goodness. Ten Thousand Talents, is near two Millions of our Money. An incredible Sum for a Servant to owe to his Lord! But this fitly represents the great Debt which lay upon Mankind, Death; which was to be struck off by a mere Act of Grace, before any Terms could be offered to us. God had as much a Right to exact or to remit this Debt, as any
common

common Master has to remit or to exact a Debt of so much Money; as is intimated to us in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, where when some murmured and complained, that those who were called in at the Eleventh Hour were *made equal to those who had born the Heat and Burden of the Day*; the Householder answers, *Is it not lawfull for me to do what I will with mine own?* Matt. xx. 15. The Benefit in this Case was God's own; properly his own. For he had by no previous Act tied himself down to it; and therefore he might *have Mercy on whom he would have Mercy, and Compassion on whom he would have Compassion*, as the Scripture speaks, Rom. ix. 15. But at the great Day of Accounts, God takes upon him to distribute Justice. Here therefore we are to look for Justice; nor will there be any room for Mercy any farther than Justice and Mercy may stand together.

Let us now attend to the Particulars of the Parable. The Case was a Case of Debt. The Servant owed his Lord Money, the Thing in the World of which Mankind are wont to be the most jealous: Nor was it a small Matter; for he owed

ten

ten Thousand Talents. The first Thing the Master did was to assert his Right. He commanded the Servant, *his Wife, and Children, and all that he had to be sold, and Payment to be made.* This was according to the Laws and Customs of those Times and in those Countries, That if a Man could not pay his Debts, his Creditor might sell him and his whole Family for Bond-Slaves; an Instance whereof you have in 2 Kings, iv. 1. *Where the poor Woman says to Elisah, my Husband is dead,--- and the Creditor is come to take unto him my two Sons to be Bond-Men.* This is a Sort of Traffick we know nothing off. But go into some other Countries even at this Day, and you will see Men, Women, and Children, brought to Market, and sold like so many Drovers of Cattle. There is nothing in the Master's Conduct thus far but what is natural and proper. For though we are to have Compassion, we are not to shew ourselves regardless of our Property; which is exposing ourselves to ill Treatment, and inviting, as it were, every Man that is so minded, to make a Prey of us. If a Man does not intend to make use of the Law, it is very fit that
those

those who are obnoxious to it, should be made sensible that he knows his Right, and that he has Power in his Hands to do himself Justice. This will make them willing to pay if they are able; and if they are not, it will make them humble and modest; which is a Thing of some Use and Consequence, and what very well becomes them. Such Effect had the Masters threatening upon his Servant. He did not deny the Debt: He did not set his Lord at Defiance; but he *fell down and worshipped him saying, have Patience with me and I will pay the all.* It is a very natural Thing for Men in Debt to call out for Patience, and to make large Promises, never considering whether they shall be able to be as good as their Word. But here was the Appearance of an honest Mind; and therefore the Master who understood his Circumstances better, it seems, than he did himself, knowing him unable to pay, generously forgave him the Debt. See now the Reverse of this Conduct in the Behaviour of this very Man towards his Fellow-Servant. The Debt was but *a Hundred Pence*, that is, not much above fifty Shillings; but small as the Sum was,
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the poor Man was no more able to pay it, than He was his *ten Thousand Talents*. Therefore he applies to his Compassion, saying, in his own Words, *have Patience with me and I will pay thee all*. It might reasonably have been supposed that so great an Instance of Mercy as his Master had shewed to him, should have been a sufficient Admonition to him, how it was proper for him to deal by his Fellow-Servant in a like Case. But the hard-hearted Man would neither forgive nor forbear, but forthwith *cast him into Prison*; which drew from his Lord this bitter Expostulation. *O thou wicked Servant! I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst it. Shouldst not thou also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had pity on thee?* Observe now the Consequence of this wicked Deed. His Lord, before, had determined to forgive him. But now he alters his kind Intention, and gives him up to the Severity of the Law. He *delivered him to the Tormentors*, that is, to the common Officers of Justice in such Cases, *till he should pay all that was due*; that is, for his whole Life; for we have before heard that he had not wherewith to pay. This our
Saviour

Saviour sets forth as a Warning to all his Disciples; by whom God will deal in like Manner, if, as he has been merciful to them, they are not also merciful to one another. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts, forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.*

The Lessons of Instruction we may learn from hence are these :

1. That in the Cases mentioned in the Parable, the lowest Degree of Compassion to be expected from us is Forbearance. The Servant asked his Master to have Patience with him. The Master grants him this, and more. Therefore he would not have refused him this, if this would have been sufficient. On the other Hand, the Servant asks his Fellow-Servant to have Patience with him, which he refuseth, and immediately flees to the Law for Aid. This and this only, for ought appears, was that which so grievously provoked his Lord. The Man was not in a Condition to pay at present; but the Story does not say, but he might have found out Means to satisfy the Debt, if his Fellow-Servant would have had Patience with him. This is very frequently
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the Case. A Man may not be able to pay. a Sum of Money now, who may be able to pay it at some Time hence. In such a Case, it would be hard and cruel to send him to a Goal. The Law may be used; but it should be used as the last Remedy. This is using it right. For the Intention of the Law is, by its Terrors to make Men just, not by its Executions to make them miserable. And as this is right, in Respect of our Neighbour, so it is commonly prudent in Regard to ourselves. If a Man is able to pay, but not willing; the Aid of the Law may be necessary to make him so. But if he is willing, and not able; the Law will not make him more able, but certainly helps to ruin him the faster. We may learn,

2. That where there is Want of Ability to pay, Charity will, in many Cases, oblige us to forgive. This is expressly noted in the Parable, as the Ground and Reason of the Lord's Compassion to his Servant that *he had not wherewith to pay*. But how are we to measure a Man's Ability? By the very utmost of what he can call his own? I judge not. The Servant in the Parable had something. The Master might have fold

fold him, and his Wife, and his Children, and all that he had; which, though we are not to suppose that it would have satisfied, would have lessened the Debt. But here his Compassion interposed; and he rather chose to lose the Whole than to come to this Extremity with him. Something like this will become every good Christian. We should not lay our Hands upon the last Farthing, though in strict Justice it may be our Due, but leave our poor Neighbour wherewith to live by honest Industry; much less, when we have taken from him all that he is worth, should we seize his Carcass (which we cannot sell) and commit him to Prison, there to linger out a miserable Life; useless to his Family, useless to ourselves, unless it can be any Reparation to us, to know that he is miserable.

I do not however suppose that it was our Saviour's Intention in this Parable to tell us, that it is absolutely, and in all Cases, a Breach of Charity to take the Severity of the Law against Offenders of this Sort, merely because they are unable to pay their just Debts. The Parable only mentions that the Man had not wherewith to
pay

pay. How he came to be disabled; or by what Means he contracted so large a Debt, it does not mention. And therefore, if there are any Circumstances, in Reason, which will shew a Distinction in such Cases; I conceive that the Parable leaves all such Circumstances to have their just Weight. Our Saviour came to enforce the Law of Nature, not to extend it beyond its proper Bounds: And it is to be observed that he treats this as a Case of Charity; which it could not be, if the precise Manner and Measure of it were defined by particular Rules. In this therefore, as well as in other Cases, Prudence may and should interpose to direct Charity: For, lay it but once down as a standing Rule, that as soon as a Man becomes unable to pay his Debts, he is out of the Reach of the Law; and you will have Insolvents in Abundance. If his Circumstances are already bad, he will have no more to do than to make all the Haste he can to make them desperate, and the Business will be done. But Reason shews us, that it will make a great Difference in these Cases whether a Man has an honest or a dishonest Mind; whether he takes an

industrious Care to live, and is reduced by mere Imprudence, or by Accidents which it was not in his Power to prevent ; or whether, in Defiance of Right and Honesty, he wastes what he knows is not his own, and contrives to cheat his Creditors of their Money. Such Wretches as these have no more a Right to our Compassion than Highwaymen or House-breakers ; for they do the same Thing in a different Way. Upon such as these the Law is rightly executed, which was intended as a Terror to evil Doers. The Parable itself will justify this Distinction. The Master forgave his Servant, knowing him unable to pay. But it was upon the Presumption of an honest Mind. For as soon as he found in him a wicked Spirit, he committed him to the Law to be punished without Mercy. His Offence, it is true, was Want of Compassion to his Fellow-Servant. But suppose he had been found unjust to his Master ; suppose he had been a Knave or a Spendthrift ; would he not have deserved the same Treatment ? Is Want of Charity a greater Crime than Want of Justice ? These Points therefore are clearly out of the Case. Knaves should
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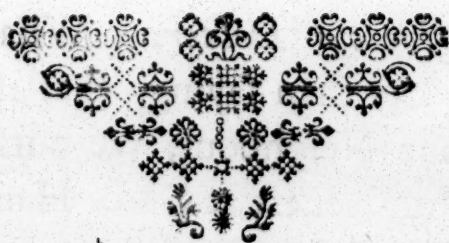
be punished as Knaves deserve, to be an Example to others. But when honest and industrious Men become obnoxious to the Law, though the Law (which can make no Distinction) spares them not, every merciful Man will; who will consider these Cases not as the Acts of Men, but as Acts of Providence, to which he is bound to submit. If God blasts your Corn by Lightning, or your House is burnt down by Fire: If he sends the Murrain among your Cattle, or by some common Calamity deprives you of your Substance; do you not take it patiently? Why then if your Neighbour, by such like Casualties, is disabled from paying you your Dues, will you not also take it patiently? He is but an Instrument in the Hand of Providence, and, so far as he is himself merely passive, no more accountable for the Wrong than the Storms or the Tempests are.

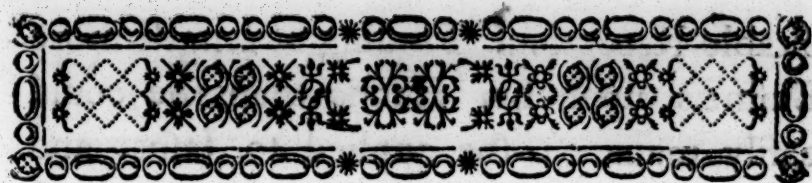
It requires an honest and a benevolent Mind to enable us rightly to distinguish upon this Point. When a Man owes you Money, and cannot pay you, it is a very easy Matter for you to say he is idle, or he is a Knave; he might have been able, if he would: And selfish, hard-hearted Men

naturally will be apt to say so, who to save themselves from Acts of Charity, or to gratify Anger and Resentment, are very apt to impute every Thing to their Neighbours Fault which happens to him in Prejudice of themselves. The Experience of this Spirit has induced States to interpose by Laws in Favour of insolvent Debtors, which it is not my Business to meddle with. I can only say, that every Man has a Law (and perhaps the best) within himself, if he will attend to it; I mean the Law of Humanity; which is most strongly enforced in the Case suggested by this Parable. For consider it. Mankind by Sin were under Condemnation; under the Sentence of Death which is the Wages of Sin. God of his own free Goodness offers Pardon and eternal Life in Christ, under this express Condition, that as he has been merciful to us, so we should be kind and merciful one towards another. Is not this a reasonable Demand? If I should offer to forgive you ten thousand Pounds, upon Condition that you forgive another Man fifty; would you not do it? Obedience indeed is due to every Command of God, who invites us to him by so rich a Reward.

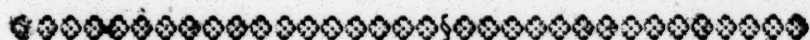
ward. But this Command carries with it a special Weight. If the Servant in the Parable had forborn his Fellow-Servant, but treated him ill in some other Matter, his Lord would not have taken the Thing so heinously. But to offend in that very Instance in which he himself had been so much beholden to his Master; this was it that gave the Provocation. And to shew what Stress our Lord lays upon it, he hath, in that very Prayer which he hath left us for our daily Use, instructed us not so much as to ask Forgiveness of God, unless we are ready to forgive our Brethren. *Forgive us our Debts as we forgive our Debtors.* What is this, in Effect, less than saying, that if we forgive not our Neighbour, we ourselves deserve no Forgiveness at God's Hands. And are we then in a Condition to challenge God to Justice, and say, we have no need of thy Mercy? Wretched Sinners! It is Mercy, yea infinite Mercy, that must save us. Should God *be extreme to mark what we have done amiss, who might abide the Trial?* What Flesh could be justified in his Sight?-----Let us then bend

our Minds to learn and to practice this great Lesson. Let us love our Brother, and forgive our Brother ; for his Sake, for our own Sakes, and for the Sake of him *who both loved us and gave himself for us.*





S E R M O N XI.



LUKE X. 39, 40.

*And---Mary---sat at Jesus Feet, and heard
his Word.*

But Martha was cumbred about much serving.

OUR Saviour was now making himself a Guest to two of his Disciples, Martha and Mary, the Sisters of Lazarus, whom he afterwards raised from the Dead. The Behaviour of these two Persons towards our Lord, as represented to us in the Text, was very different; for Mary attended wholly to the Improvement of herself by our Saviour's Instructions; whilst Martha, intent upon her domestick Affairs, seemed to think of nothing else but how she might best express her Regard to him by an hos-

pitiable Reception. Finding at length more Business upon her Hands than she could easily manage; she applied to Jesus, and with some Kind of Resentment said, *Lord, dost thou not care that my Sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she come and help me.* Our Lord was so far from offering to redress what she complained of as a Grievance, that he takes this Occasion to rebuke her over forward and ill-placed Civilities; and tells her, that her Sister, in the Part which she had chosen, had acted more wisely than herself. *Martha, Martha; thou art troubled about many Things, but one Thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken from her.* Vers. 41, 42.

It does not appear that our Saviour found any other Fault with this Woman's Conduct, than that it was unseasonable and immoderate. To receive Strangers with Courtesy and Respect is an Act of Humanity and good Nature; and Jesus, who was the greatest Prophet that ever appeared in the World, and the Author of the greatest Blessings that were ever vouchsafed to Mankind, had a Right to be treated with a suitable Distinction. But her Civility out-

run her Piety. She employed most Care where she ought to have bestowed least. As if He who came as a Preacher of Righteousness, and whose *Meat and Drink* it was *to do the Will of his heavenly Father*, would make greater Account of the Manner in which he was entertained than of her shewing a proper Regard to the End of his coming. In this she judged ill, and stood less recommended to her blessed Master than her Sister Mary; who, influenced by a more discreet and noble Emulation, laid all Business aside, to make the utmost Advantage of the Favour vouchsafed to her spiritual Improvement.

The Text being thus opened, it gives me an Opportunity to say something to you of the devotional Part of Religion; by which is meant, either the Elevation of the Soul to God, in solemn Acts of Worship; or (in a larger Sense) the withdrawing the Mind from temporal to attend upon spiritual Things. It is for the latter that Mary stands here commended above her Sister; but both Notions meet in one and the same general Idea, and may be treated of together as one. My Meaning is, to shew in what Rank or Order religious

religious Exercises stand in the Scale of Christian Duties; and to recommend the Use of them (so far as it may be fit) by proper Arguments.

In the first Place then, it must be laid down as a leading Point, that no such Attendance upon religious Exercises should be paid, as infer a Neglect of the proper and necessary Duties of our worldly Callings; nor will the Case before us justify any Construction upon it to the contrary. For what was Martha doing? How was she employed when her Master gave her this Rebuke? Not in any Matter of necessary Business, but in a Point of mere Respect only; which Mary thought fit to postpone to that more important Call which the present Occasion ministred to her. Of the Quality and Circumstances of these two Women we know no more than that they were not great. We read nothing of their Men-Servants or their Maid-Servants; and it is probable they had neither. For Martha dispatched her Family Affairs with her own Hands; and this was the Foundation of her Complaint. But though the Warmth of Mary's Zeal would not permit her to stir from her Master's Side whilst he honoured

noured her with his Presence ; it does not appear that on ordinary Occasions she was wanting in any Duty appertaining to her Station ; nor was she now. Her Hands might have been wanted to set out the Table in the best Manner (of which our Saviour made no Reckoning) but they were not wanted to provide Bread for her Family.

When Christ first called out his Disciples, he commanded them to forsake all and follow him. This was an extraordinary Case ; for which extraordinary Helps were provided. But in the ordinary State of the World, we must lay it down as a Rule, that when God calls Men to Labour, by the Station in which his Providence has placed them, there is as much Religion in working as there is in hearing or in praying. Nay, there is no Religion in the one without the other ; for to what End serves Religion, but to lead us to our Duty ? God has no Need of us ; and if our Services were as little beneficial to ourselves as they are to him to whom they are paid, they would neither have been required nor expected. But God therefore ties us to religious Duties, because they are Instruments serving to direct
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and enforce a proper Conduct in all Points, whether they concern God, our Neighbour or ourselves. So that religious Duties, standing in Subordination to the Duties of our Calling, not in Opposition to them, never can, or never ought to operate to their Destruction; for if they do, they lose their very Nature and become another Thing. Religious Madnefs, or religious Folly you may call them if you please; but religious Duties they cannot be.

But though Men sometimes run into this extream, comparatively perhaps it is but feldom. The more general Fault is being too attentive to this World, and shewing too little Respect to the Exercise of Religion. There are a great many who drudge and toil from Day to Day, who feldom enter into a Church or into their Closets. And yet they are no Despisers of Religion. They believe in God; they reverence his Word, and keep themselves within the Bounds of Honesty and Sobriety, not unmindful of the Account they are to render at the Day of Judgment. This suits (nearly perhaps) the Character of Martha, who was Christ's Disciple as well as her Sister, and whom he charges with
nothing

nothing criminal. Mary had all her Sister's Virtue, and something more. She was more attentive to her Interests in another World than to any earthly Thing; and therefore less exact and observant in a Point of mere outward Respect, than in what she thought more essential to the Regard due to so great a Prophet. Martha's Civilities, though ill-placed, were yet sincere. Mary's Piety was warmer, yet was she wanting in nothing necessary. And this is the proper Lesson we are to learn from these two Cases, viz. That when all necessary Duties are discharged towards our Families, our Friends, our Neighbours, or our Country; the more of our Time we devote to God in the Exercises of Religion, so much the better; and if we must err a little on one Side or on the other, it is much more becoming us to be wanting in some Points in which Duty is not essentially concerned, than to neglect any Opportunities that are seasonably offered for our Improvement in Virtue and a good Life.

This is our Saviour's Determination. But look into the general Behaviour of Christians, and you will see the Reverse. Much Preciseness in Matters of Form and Ceremony

Ceremony. Much Remissness in religious Duties; from which we are easily diverted, if an officious Visit, or any trifling Matter, in which our worldly Interest or our Pleasures are concerned, stand in the Way. In many Instances of this Kind of Conduct it would be exceeding difficult to shew that there is any Thing that is strictly sinful. For though the Law of God commands our Attendance upon religious Duties, yet the *when* and *how often* are Matters left at large. The Thing in the Gross is to be looked upon as a necessary Part of the Obedience of a Christian; not in this or in that particular Instance of it. Allowances must be made for reasonable Hindrances; and what these are the Law defineth not, but hath left to private Discretion to determine. Where the Law of God hath left this Point, there it will be fit that I should leave it too; and therefore I can only urge the Thing in general, that so far as Duty will permit, so far as Obligations of other Kinds will allow, we be diligent in these Things: For though Omissions of this Sort may not be Offences in such a Degree as to shut us out from the Kingdom of Heaven; there may be that in them which
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will deserve Reprehension, and place us lower in the Esteem of our heavenly Father. Jesus did not cast off Martha in Displeasure; but Mary had the Testimony of greater Approbation.

We may love this World too much; but we cannot love God too much; nor can we be ever weary of his Love: For the more God loves us, the better he will reward us; and the Joys of Heaven will not satiate as these gross and earthly Pleasures do. Nor is it less certain that the Measure of God's Love will always bear Proportion to the Degrees of our Virtue. When our Faith is more firm and stable; when our Love is more warm and operative; when we raise ourselves more above the Power of Temptations, and become more fruitful in every good Work; in all this consists the Growth and Perfection of Virtue. To keep ourselves free from the more gross and palpable Crimes, may perhaps be thought no great Attainment; and yet it is no mean one neither. But to excell in Virtue is a very difficult Work; not to be effected by a slight, and, as it were, casual Attention to spiritual Things, but by a strong and constant Application of them
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to the Mind; and what is the End of frequency in Religious Duties, but to keep us always awake to those Reflections, which are proper to break the Force of Temptations, and to support and encourage us in a virtuous Life? Religious Duties may be so performed, as to have none of these good Effects, and it is to be feared, they too often are so. But this is our own Fault. Instruments they are in the Nature of them tending to these Effects; and if we use them properly we shall always find them successful.

When we are speaking of Religious Duties, we are naturally apt to connect them with stated Times and Seasons; and so far as they are of a publick Nature, it will be necessary so to do; for publick Assemblies there cannot be without Times and Seasons, agreed upon by common Consent. But so much more indulgent is the Gospel than the Law, that whilst the legal Services were tied down to his Temple of Jerusalem, God accepts our Services when or wheresoever they shall be offered up; at all Times and in all Places, if we *worship him in Spirit and in Truth*. By this Means there is no State or Condition
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of Men, that can plead an Exemption from these Duties. Every Man (we will say) cannot come to Church consistently with the Duties of his Station, at least not constantly or frequently. But no Man is therefore under a Necessity to live without Religion. We may pray in our Chambers or with our Families; and if we make the next World the Object of our first and principal Care (which no Man ought to be so busy as not to do) it will be as natural to us to allow some Share of our Time to domestick Piety, as other Portions of it to eating or to sleeping; for the one is as necessary to the Strength of the Soul, as the others are to the Support and Refreshment of the Body. But abstracting all Considerations of Times or Places, every Man may be devout who is so disposed. For even whilst the Hands are employed, the Soul may be with God; in devout and heavenly Contemplations; in ardent Wishes, and Prayers; in wise and holy Resolutions. And give me leave to say, that this is the Perfection of Devotion, (not when it comes upon us and goes away again, in short and transient Acts, but) when it Works itself into the Habit and

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Constitution of the Soul, directing every Thought, every Word, and every Action to the Supreme Good. Such a Man as this can never wilfully or deliberately offend, nor slip in any remarkable Instance; for he *hath God always before his Face, so that he cannot greatly fall.* But if a Man regularly says his Prayers, and as often as he prays forgets what he has been doing as soon as his Prayers are over, very little will come of this. Because the World is apt to steal upon us too much, therefore the wise Providence of God hath thought fit to interpose these seasonable Checks, to serve as Remembrances and call us to Duty. But if a Watch is set to awaken us at a certain Hour of the Night to prepare for a Journey, or to guard against Thieves, who are likely to beset our House; it is not supposed that as soon as the Alarum is struck, we should lay ourselves down to sleep again.

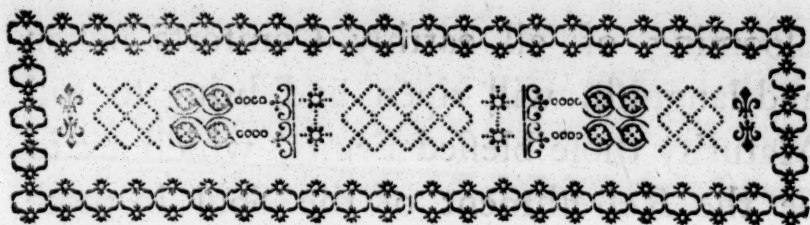
You see now that our blessed Saviour's Instruction, rightly understood, and properly applied, contains nothing but what will suit with Men of all Ranks and Conditions; as well those who have little leisure

sure from their Worldly Occupations, as those who have much. Far was it from his Intention to encourage any Man to desert his natural Station in Life; to sequester himself from the World, and shut himself up in a Cloyster; which is not to overcome Temptations, but to run away from them; or if it serves to the Improvement of his own Virtues, it makes him of no use to Mankind. But I do not know whether some Tempers are not as much in Danger from a Life of Sloth and Idleness, as others are from too much Business. The middle Way is generally the safest; neither to have too much to do with the World, nor too little; and if we knew the true Point where to stop, it would be well. But here lies our Danger. When the Mind takes a Turn for Pleasure; or when Wealth flows in apace (for these are the Things that beguile us) we are wont to be too much occupied in them, and to become merely Men of this World without Taste or Relish for Spiritual and Heavenly Things: And is it to be wondered at, if Virtue among such as these runs low? Assuredly, if our Virtues barely live in such a Soil, they can-

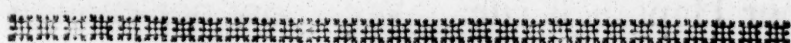
not thrive. If we stand our Ground we can make no Proficiency. Where Youth leaves us, there old Age will find us ; which is too much, perhaps, if we have chosen this World for our Portion, and certainly too little, if we have placed our Hopes in the next, as where our first and principal Interest lies.

According to all common Ways of reckoning, the greatest Care is due, where it is likely to turn to the best Account ; and of this we may be assured, that how dear soever our Virtues may cost us, we cannot give more for them than they will yield us back again ; which is more than can be said of any worldly Acquisitions, which hardly, in any Sense, answer the Pains we are wont to bestow about them. For to say the best of this World that can be said, it is but a Provision for Years ; for how few or how many we cannot tell. Misfortunes perhaps may not come, but Death must come, when the Riches, and the Pleasures, and the Glories of this World shall pass away like a Dream. But he that improves his Virtues, lays up a Stock for Eternity, and Death, at whose distant Approach the gayest and most bloom-

blooming of all earthly Comforts sicken and languish, will ripen and bring to full Maturity those blessed Fruits, which are to be the Refreshment of the Soul in those Heavenly Places which God hath appointed for our last Abode, and to which the better we come prepared, the higher will our Happiness rise. We know not enough of the Nature of that State, to say what Remembrance we shall have of Things done in the Body; nor what Kind of Sentiments we shall feel, when we, who by our Capacities and Opportunities were qualified to have distinguished ourselves in Glory among our Fellows, shall be called to *sit down in the lowest Room*. But of this we may be certain; that God will suffer no Man to be a Gainer by his Unfruitfulness. The more we will take of this World the less of the next will fall to our Share; and this will be infinitely to our Disadvantage upon this single Account, if there were no other Reason, that what is lost from this World finds its Recompence; but what is lost from the next World is lost for ever.

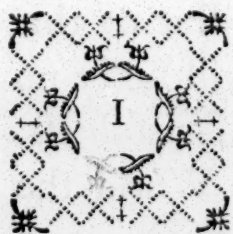


S E R M O N XII.



PROVERBS iii. 5, 6.

*Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and
lean not to thine own Understanding.
In all thy Ways acknowledge him; and he
shall direct thy Paths.*



It is the great Virtue of Religion, and what should above all Things recommend it to our diligent Study and Practice; that it furnishes us with the best Rules of Behaviour, under all Circumstances and Conditions of Life. The Advice which I have read to you from the Book of Solomon, though at all Times useful to be observed, seems to have a peculiar Reference to Times of Difficulty and Distress; when Things go ill with us in this World,

World, and but little Hope is left from the common Means of Human Prudence. In these Cases we are referred to God as our Protector and Defender, upon whom we may rely with full Assurance not to be disappointed at the last. This is the Meaning of the Expression, *he shall direct thy Paths*, that is, he will so order Things by the Directions of his good Providence, as to bring them to a happy Conclusion.

But for our farther Instruction in this Subject, it will be necessary to consider, Who are qualified for the Exercise of this Virtue;-----to what Points it extends; and-----what are its genuine Marks and Characters: Which Particulars, when rightly understood, we shall be made fully sensible of its real Use and Excellency.

As to the First; Who are qualified for the Virtue of Trust; they are those who fear God and keep his Commandments; for to such as these the Advice is directed, as the Context shews. *My Son forget not my Law, but let thine Heart keep my Commandments.---Let not Mercy and Truth forsake thee; bind them about thy Neck, write them upon the Table of thine Heart.*

So shalt thou find Favour and good Understanding in the Sight of God and Man. Trust to the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own Understanding; in all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths. You see here, that the Duty of Trust stands immediately connected with the *keeping God's Law*; a plain Intimation that the one rests upon the other, as its proper Foundation; which, indeed, the Text expressly asserts. God will *direct our Paths*; but it is upon this Condition, or with this Reserve, that we *acknowledge him in all our Ways*. To the same Purpose the Prophet, Isaiah 1. 10. *Who is he among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth his Servant, that walketh in Darknes?----Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Which is saying, in Effect, that those only who fear and obey God have Reason to trust in him for Help and Protection when they *walk in Darknes*, that is, in Times of Distress and Trouble. And the Thing very plainly speaks itself. For to trust in God is to rely upon him for special Favour, which none are entitled to but those who have distinguished themselves by special Merit. Blessings
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there are great and many, which God dispenseth in common to all. *He is kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil. He maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust*, as our Saviour says Matt. v. 45. Luke vi. 35. This bad Men see, and therefore they look for them as Things of Course. But this is not what we properly mean by Trust. Common good Offices we expect from all Men: But when I say, I trust to my Friend or to my Neighbour, I am understood as professing some special Confidence in him. And what Reason can there be for special Confidence in God but this, that we have special Merit to plead? Men oftentimes act by Caprice and Humour; but *the Judgment of God is according to Truth*, and with him *there is no Respect of Persons*.

Trust then is a Privilege as well as a Duty, and supposes Virtue as its Foundation. It supposes likewise Care and Industry in the Use of all natural Means, which the Providence of God hath put in our Power, whereby to help and provide for ourselves. When we are directed to trust in God, it is an Admonition to us, that
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we are not sufficient for ourselves without Him. But every Man may do something to help himself; and till he has done that, it will be Presumption to expect Help from God. Thus, with respect to the Body, God will not work Miracles to feed and cloath us, but hath ordained that *he that will not labour shall not eat*. So, with regard to the Wants of the Soul, though he has promised us the Grace of his Spirit to assist us in well doing, still it is but in the Way of Assistance, to supply what is lacking when we have done our best. And therefore we must watch, and pray, and strive against Flesh and Blood, otherwise all Confidence in God will be vain and foolish.

2. Let us now consider to what Points this Duty extends, or what those Things are for which a good Man may trust or rely upon God. And these are not absolutely every Thing which he may wish, but every Thing which it is fit for a wise and a good God to do for him. For this Reason, Trust can have nothing to do with Specialties, any farther than the Promises of God are special; for we do not understand the true Measure of God's Wisdom

or Goodness, and therefore cannot say, under such or such Circumstances, what it is fit or nor fit for him to do for his Creatures. When we trust in God, we trust in him for Good: But we may mistake our own Good; and if we do, we shall wish what God cannot grant us. And suppose we were certain that what we wish is truly good; it may be a Good not fit for Us: For God is not bound to bestow all Good upon every Creature; which would infer an Equality in Happiness. Whereas it is plain in Fact and Experience, that God hath constituted diverse Orders of Beings, designed for different Degrees of Happiness, as their Natures are endued with different Degrees of Perfection. We see this plainly enough in this World. The Happiness of a Brute is not the same with the Happiness of a Man; and among the Human Race, Happiness is not divided in equal Measure. We have Reason to think that there will be as much Difference in the next World, since our Happiness there will depend upon our Improvements here, in which the Abilities, and Opportunities of Men, differently determined by the Providence of God, create a great, and almost

most infinite, Variety. Therefore it is not the proper Exercise of Trust to depend upon God for what is absolutely best for us, but for what is so regard being had to the Rank and Order in which we stand. Whilst we thus rest in Generals we cannot err. For God will as certainly do what is best for good Men, in this Sense, as it is sure, that by the same Wisdom by which he made the World, he will also govern it. But if we take upon ourselves to prescribe to God, it is more than probable that we shall often meet with Disappointments; not because God can fail us, but because we are foolish and deceive ourselves, depending upon him for such Things as he has no where warranted us to expect from him.

This Observation should be carefully attended to in common Life, as what will help us to worthy Thoughts of God and the Ways of his Providence; and prevent those Mistakes, which are apt to stagger the Minds of Men, not accustomed to consider. When we read the Scriptures, and there observe the many Promises of Protection and Blessing to good Men; we are apt to consider them as privileged from
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the common Calamities of Life ; and when we find that this does not answer in Experience, our Confidence fails, and we too easily begin to doubt whether these are not vain Words. But the Mistake is our own. For this Life being relative to a better ; (which is the proper Reward of good Men) it will follow that the Good or Evil of this Life must always be considered with a View to this Relation ; and the best Condition for every Man here, must be that which most contributes to his Happiness hereafter. If you throw out a future State, this you will find, that all Conditions do not alike suit all Men. For Happiness results not from the absolute Nature of Things externally good, but from the Proportion they bear to the Capacities of Men. A mere Competency is better to a wise Man, than a large Estate is to a Fool. Now if you take in a future State, another Rule of Proportion will arise ; and Men's Conditions, to make them really beneficial, must be suited to their Capacities, and to their Virtues too. This may help us to understand that God is not worse than his Word, when he suffers good Men to be exercised by Afflictions,

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if those Afflictions are profitable for them, that is, if they are a necessary or an useful Means to improve their Virtues; and such they will always be, when they bear them with the Patience and Submission that becomes them. Now this is that for which we may always trust in God; that if we will do our Parts, he will give us Strength to bear what he is pleased to lay upon us. For this he hath promised: This his Goodness naturally leads us to expect. *God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 13. But actual Deliverance he hath not absolutely promised, and therefore in no Case are we to depend upon it. Hope for it we may; because God sometimes vouchsafes it, and it may in many Cases well consist with his Wisdom and Goodness so to do; as in the Case of Job, of whom it is said, that *God blessed his latter End more than his Beginning.* Job xlii. 12. But as these Things depend upon Reasons of Providence unknown to us, we must take our Lot as it may happen, and not think ourselves neglected,

lected, if our Hopes should fail us. When God promises good Men the good Things of this Life, he promises them as good. But that is not good, which deprives us of a greater Good. And therefore when the Evils of Life are a Furtherance to the future Happiness of good Men, God more effectually answers his Promises to protect and bless them, in sending those Evils, than he would by withholding or taking them away. In a few Words, the proper Exercise of the Virtue of Trust, lies in paying due Attention to that one Rule of the Apostle, Rom. viii. 28. *All Things shall work together for good, to them that love God.* Which is saying in Effect, that God will take Care that no Man at last shall be a Sufferer by his Virtues. Sufferers in this World good Men may be, and very often are; but their present Loss shall be their future Gain, and be recompenced to them with ample Interest; *these light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, working for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

3. We are next to consider, what are the genuine Marks and Characters of this
Virtue,

Virtue, by which we may know whether we have it or whether we have it not.

And here it is evident, that he who is firmly persuaded of this, that *all Things shall work together to him for good*, and makes it the governing Principle of his Life, will bear the Evils of Life with a steady and an even Mind. I do not mean that we shall be insensible under Misfortunes, or that it will be in every respect the same Thing to us, whether *we receive Good at the Hands of God*, or whether we *receive Evil*: But this; that outward Good or Evil will make no Change in our Behaviour, in those Points where the Virtue of a Man is properly concerned; that whether God comforts us by his Mercies, or humbles us by Severities, we shall serve him with the same Integrity. Not to feel, is not the Property of Men, but of Stocks or of Stones. And what we feel as painful or disgustful, cannot be indifferent to us. If it were, neither would it be an Evil, nor would it answer the Purpose intended by it. God sends Afflictions to mend the Heart; to wean and disentangle us from this vain World and bring us nearer unto himself. But all this sup-
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poses that they make some Difference in our present State ; for what nothing affects or alters us, can nothing move us. The Apostle tells us, that *no Chastisement for the present is joyous but grievous.* Heb. xii. 11. Needs must it be so; for he that chastises us is understood to give us Pain; and the more we feel, the higher will our Virtues rise, provided we take Care not to offend. I will go farther yet, and say, that Trust may consist not only with the Sense and Feeling of Evil, but with the Disorders of human Passion and Infirmary; of which the greatest Examples of Patience afford strong and convincing Proof. *I will not refrain my Mouth* (says Job) *I will speak in the Anguish of my Spirit, I will complain in the Bitterness of my Soul.* Job vii. 11. Look into his Complaints, and what can you find more warm and passionate? *O! that my Grief were thoroughly weighed, and my Calamity laid in the Ballance together. For now it would be heavier than the Sand of the Sea, therefore my Words are swallowed up. For the Arrows of the Almighty are within me, the Poison whereof drinketh up my Spirit.-----* *O! that I might have my Request, and that*

God would grant me the Thing that I long for ; even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his Hand and cut me off. Chap. vi. Ver. 2. Again, Chap. iii. Ver. 11. *Why did I not give up the Ghost when I came out of the Belly ? Why did the Knees prevent me, and the Breasts that I should suck ? For then I should have been still and been quiet ; I should have slept and been at Rest.* These are Expressions of great Anxiety (not to say Impatience) of Mind, which I have recited for the Consolation of those, who are apt to grieve and complain when the Hand of God is heavy upon them ; and to think the worse of their Virtues, because they have the Weakness and the Infirmities of Men. Religion finds us Men, and will leave us such. It is in every Man's Power, by the Aids of God's Grace, to bear Afflictions ; but whether he shall bear them with more or less Disturbance from Passion, this depends much upon Temper and Constitution, which Reason may help us to correct and moderate, but cannot always conquer. But what is it to bear Afflictions ; and where does the true Point of Distinction lie ? I will give it you from
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the same Pattern, Chap. i. Ver. 22. *In all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly.* Severe as his Trial was, he did not impeach the Justice, or the Goodness of God, but in great Meekness and Submission of Mind fell down and worshipped the Author of his Sufferings. *Shall we receive Good at the Hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive Evil?* Chap. ii. Ver. 10. *Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Chap. i. Ver. 21. So the Psalmist, *I was dumb, I opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it.* His Meaning is, not that he uttered no Complaints, for read but the Book of Psalms, and on many Occasions you will find him full of them. But though he complained, yet he submitted himself to God, and would accept of no Deliverance but from himself. *Remove thy Stroke away from me, I am consumed by the Blow of thy Hand.* Psalm xxxix. 9, 10. This is the true Mark of Trust; to wait our Deliverance from God, without running into Ways of our own Invention in Defiance of his Authority. When Men

are poor, for Instance, and steal; when they covet and help themselves by Oppression and Wrong; when they chuse rather to offend Conscience, than bear any Thing that is disgustful or severe; or (which is the saddest Case of all) when impatient of Life they become their own Executioners, and throw back their Souls, as it were in Scorn, into the Hands of him that gave them; this is renouncing all Trust in God, and setting up upon our own Bottoms. Help comes from God when it comes by Means of his own Appointment. And such are all Means consistent with Honesty and a good Conscience. But when we step out into bye Paths, and seek our Happiness where God has not taught us to expect it; *this is leaning to our own Understanding* and making ourselves wiser than He.

4. From all this we may learn, in the last Place, what is the true Use, and Excellence of this Virtue. It is well set forth by the Prophet Isaiah, Chap. xxvi. Ver. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace whose Mind is stayed in thee, because he trusteth in thee.* And the Reason is plain; because he who trusts in God, draws the truest Enjoy-

Enjoyment from the good Things of this World, and is best prepared to bear the Want of them. There can be no true Enjoyment of this World, without a good Hope in the next. For, say that we have Wealth, Honour, and Power; every Thing that courts and flatters the Passions of Men; yet whilst we consider them as our single good, confined within the narrow Limits of this frail and perishing Estate; the Fears and Apprehensions of what is to come, when this Life shall have an End, will damp and deaden all our Pleasures. Now you will remember, that Trust is the Reliance of a good Man, not of the Wicked and Disobedient. Before a Man is qualified to trust in God, you must suppose him virtuous; in the Fruits of which he will feel perpetual Satisfaction, howsoever it may please God to deal with him as to outward Things. What is present he will enjoy with Moderation and Thankfulness; what is distant he will not anxiously pursue, as knowing that the Things of this World are but the Appendages, not the essential constituent Parts of Human Happiness. A Mind thus disposed, will always be prepared to bear Disappointments;

ments; without which Provision we shall be very ill equipt for Life; for the World is full of them. It is hazardous to set our Hearts upon any Thing. *Riches make themselves Wings and flee away*, and the Misfortune of a single Day may blast and confound the Labours of many Years. Honour is fickle as the Breath of Men, and Power, which hangs upon both, of Course can have nothing stable. If therefore we mean to be happy, we must treat these Things in a Manner suitable to their Natures; use them whilst we have them, but with that Reserve and Disengagement of Mind, that if Fortune flies from us and leaves us naked of outward Comforts, we may sit down and wrap ourselves up in our own Virtues. The World is not at our Command, but our Virtues are; and it comes much to the same Reckoning whether we have this World, or whether we know how to live without it.

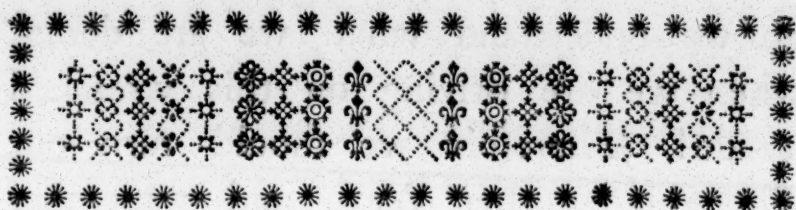
This is the great Thing that gives good Men the Advantage over bad ones, in respect of the Happiness of this Life: They are less concerned in the Changes to which Human Things are subject. When a bad Man loses this World he loses his all;
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and this makes him start and fly back at every Apprehension of Danger. But when a good Man loses this World, he loses but a Trifle. His great Treasure is still untouched, and stands upon a Foundation far removed out of the Reach of Hazard. This is the proper Source of Fortitude. *Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff comfort me,* says David Psalm xxiii. 4. But bad Men are naturally Cowards; for having no Confidence in God, they have none in any Thing else, as, reasonably, indeed, they cannot have; because there is nothing else which may be depended upon.

The Use that I would make of this Discourse, is to encourage all to a steady Adherence to God, in the Practice of Religion, as the only Path that will carry us safely through the various Changes and Chances of this mortal Life. It may not be in the Power of an honest Man to be rich or great; and what if it is not? He may have as good a Chance to find a Competency, as his more enterprizing Neighbour; and his lesser Portion, with a con-

tented Mind, will serve the Purpose of a greater: Or if it is our Lot to struggle with Hardships and Difficulties, let us remember, that we are serving a Master that is able to recompence to us all our Sufferings, and that our Reward in due Season shall not fail us. Let us set this Hope constantly before our Eyes, and consider what a sad Bargain we make, when we give it up to the deceitful Treasures of this World; Treasures which are wasting every Moment, and serve at best to amuse us only with a vain Shew, to leave us the more effectually disappointed at the last. There is nothing surely more vain than the Pomp and Pageantries of Life! If a Man could live for ever dressed up in Silks, in Plumes, and in Diamonds, and wanted the Satisfaction of a reasonable Mind, how much would he be the better for it. But alas! the Things that make so much Buffle in this World, are a very short and uncertain Possession. They are as fickle as they are unsatisfactory; and he that to Day sacrifices his Conscience to his Pride, his Covetousness, or his Lusts, cannot be sure that he shall enjoy the Fruits of it till to-morrow Morning. So little
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do we understand what we are doing, when we are driving on this wretched Trade! Therefore we should turn our Thoughts another Way, and remember what our blessed Saviour says, *Fear not little Flock, it is your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell that ye have and give Alms; provide yourselves Bags that wax not old; a Treasure in the Heavens which faileth not, where no Thief approacheth nor Moth corrupteth.* Luke xii. 32. 33. Let us do our Duties with an honest Mind, and leave to God's Care and Providence, the ordering the outward Circumstances of our Life; relying upon his Promise who hath said, *seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added unto you.* Matt. vi. 33. All these Things, that is, so much of them as is fit and proper for us; and more than this a wise Man will not covet.



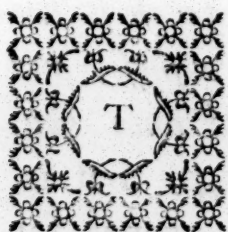
S E R M O N XIII.



HEBREWS xiii. 14.

*Let us go forth therefore to him,-----bearing
his Reproach.*

*For here we have no continuing City, but we
seek one to come.*



HERE is no Need to trouble you at present with considering the Connexion of these Words with the Subject Matter of the Apostle's Discourse. They contain an exprefs Duty frequently inculcated by our Saviour upon his Disciples, and almost always joined with the Mention of his own Sufferings. The Reason of which seems to have been that he might reconcile them to this severe Lesson,
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by shewing them that he laid no heavier a Burden upon them, than by the Will of the Father he was appointed and was willing to submit to himself. To *bear the Reproach* of Christ, is (in other Words) to take up the Cross of Christ; which, in the general Notion of it, is to yield Obedience to the Will of God, in Renunciation of this Life, and all the Advantages of it. So did Christ, and so did his Apostles; who came to shew us the Way of Truth and Righteousness; to reform a corrupted and degenerate World, and to lead them from their Idols and their Vanities, to serve the living God. But many had no Mind to be reformed, and this made them Enemies to God's Instruments in this great and good Work; against whom they turned all the Engines of worldly Power and Policy to defeat their Endeavours, and to rid the World of them. Something of this Sort is incident to us all. For there is that natural Alliance between Man and Man, that it will always much depend upon the Tempers and Dispositions of others, whether we shall live comfortably or not comfortably in this World; and scarce any one acts with that Circumspection as not sometimes
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to give Offence to those in whose Power it may be to do him an ill Turn. In many Cases it is impossible, unless we will do what we know to be unfit. Unreasonable Men will expect unreasonable Things; and if you refuse to comply, they will make you feel their Resentment. All this we must be contented to bear, if we mean to *bear the Reproach of Christ*. We must *obey God rather than Man*; and offend all the World rather than offend our Maker. In Things of Indifference, Wisdom directs us to a different Sort of Conduct. Here it is that we may *become all Things to all Men*; and he that is so stiff to his own Opinions, as never to yield or give Way, how dear soever his Obstinacy may cost him, wants the common Sense and Prudence of a Man, and hardly deserves the Name of a sociable Creature. In some Cases, Duty may oblige us, rather to submit than to prescribe. In others, Peace and Charity may recommend it to us to recede from what is strictly our Right; and when by such Sort of Compliances a Person can serve himself in some more material Points, there is nothing in this but what is very justly to be commended. But to do a sinful Act in Compliance

pliance with the Will of another to secure any Advantages of this World, how great soever they may be, is a Conduct in no View to be justified. It is an utter Renunciation of Christ and his Gospel; of God and his Authority.

When I say, we must bear those Resentments of Men which we may happen to fall under, for the Sake of maintaining a good Conscience towards God; no doubt you will understand my Meaning to be, that we must bear them with the Temper and Spirit that becomes Christians. The Effects of Resentment are sometimes slow; and if we foresee what they will be, we may use all the Precaution that the Law of God hath left in our Power to guard ourselves against them. But unlawful Courses we must not take; for we may as well do one bad Thing to prevent the Resentment, as another bad Thing to hinder the ill Effects of it. So when the Mischief is done, and not to be remedied; we must never think of Retaliation; nor because we have Reason to complain of them, give them Cause likewise to complain of us. Such was the Behaviour of Christ; *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when*
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he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

1 Pet. ii. 23. Such was the Behaviour of his Apostles; *being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat.* 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. In all Instances they were the Examples of Meekness and Patience, and Long-Suffering. To act otherwise is to contradict our own Principle; and shews that we are governed not by Conscience, but by Caprice and Self-Will; there being no Point in which the Prerogative of God is more tenderly concerned, than in leaving our Cause to him, and not taking Judgment into our own Hands. But farther;

As we were made to live a while in this World, it was necessary that we should have Passions and Affections suited to this World. We must have Food and we must have Raiment; we must have our Pleasures and Recreations. These Things we naturally covet; and it becomes an Affliction to us when we are disappointed. But we may covet these Things more than is fit; because in the Use of them we are not left to our own Wills, but tied down by the Law of God to a certain Measure
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and Proportion. What then are we to do in this Case? Why when Appetite urges beyond our due Bounds, we must contradict it; and this too will be *bearing the Reproach* of Christ, or taking up his Cross. The worst Sort of Persecution some Men suffer comes from within; from the Violence and Impetuosity of their Lusts and Passions, which is sometimes as hard to be born as outward Indignities. But we must bear with the one as well as with the other. We must not sin against God to please ourselves, any more than to please other Men. If the Law of God is broken, it is all one whether it be done to oblige a bad Man, or to gratify a wicked Inclination; and give me Leave to observe, that in this Point lies the Corner-Stone upon which the whole Fabrick of our Virtue rests; for it will be impossible to withstand Temptations from without, if we are not well appointed within. He that is mortified to the World, hath very little to hope or to fear from it; but if the Heart be secretly tainted with Ambition or Avarice, or inordinate Passions of any other Kind, our Hopes and our Fears will bear an even Pace with them, and the Effects will certainly

tainly be felt upon all Occasions which set Virtue and our present Interests at Variance with each other. Had Christ and his Apostles been Men of this World, they would have shewn another Sort of Behaviour than they did. They would not have dared to offend the Lords of this World, the Great and the Mighty. They would not have suffered Shame and Reproach, and Poverty, and Persecution for the Gospel Sake.-----But what says St. Paul? *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection.* 1 Cor. ix. 27. *The World is crucified unto me and I unto the World.* Gal. vi. 14. And this we must all do who would be Christ's, and bear the Reproach of Christ. We must *crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts* (Chap. v. Vers. 24.) it being plain that we must be Slaves to bad Men and to bad Things, in Proportion as we are Slaves to ourselves.

I have now shewn you what it is to bear the Reproach of Christ, and how much is comprehended under the Duty of taking up the Cross. A Duty, though hard to be practised, yet easy to be understood; for it has the Voice of Reason to support it, as well as the Authority of Christ.

Christ. For if God gave us Life to carry on the Work of his Providence, he must have a Right to demand it back again, when the Ends of his bringing us into Being are fully answered; of which none is qualified to judge but himself. Therefore when God sends Sickness or mortal Diseases, we are to take it patiently, and to resign up ourselves to his Disposal. For in this he does but exercise his undoubted Prerogative over us; and to murmur or repine, or be displeased, is challenging to be our own Masters, our own Creators; which is carrying the Desire of Life and of the Things pertaining to Life, to a great and unwarrantable Excess. So it is when in the Course of God's Providence we are called to Sufferings or Death, and we refuse to suffer or die, that is chuse rather to forfeit our Allegiance to God, than to part with Life or the Benefits of it. For it as much shews God's Will to call us hence, when he takes away the moral Capacity of living, as when he takes away the natural. It can no more be supposed God's Intention that we should live without Virtue, or a due Submission to his Law, than that we should live without Food or Raiment.

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The one is as necessary to a right State of Being, as the other is to our Being at all. And therefore when Providence brings on such a Concurrence of Events, as enforces the Necessity either to give up Life and the Benefits of it, or to part with our Virtues; it is the same Thing, in Effect, as if he should send Famine or Pestilence. In the one Case we cannot live, in the other we ought not to live. So says our Saviour, Matt. x. 37.---40. *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* Houses and Lands, and Wife and Children; whatever is dearest to us in this World, and even this World itself, must be given up, when we cannot keep them with a good Conscience. All this (I say) is but Reason.-----For see the Encouragement! *He that loseth his Life for my Sake shall find it.*-----Here we have no continuing City, but we seek one to come. The City to come is the heavenly Jerusalem; the Place of God and his Holy Angels, where good Men shall live, when they are removed

removed out of this World, and there dwell for ever. And this is what the Apostle would put us in Mind of; that this World is not the Place of our proper Abode; our Home, as we commonly speak; but a short Passage to it. Heaven is the Place of our proper Abode. It is for this that we were created and sent into this World; for this that we are called also in Christ. You might as well say that the Womb is a Man's proper Abode, respect being had to his earthly Existence; as that this World is his proper Abode, regard being had to the whole Extent and Compass of his Being. We pass into this World from nothing, through the Womb where we are prepared and fitted for this natural Life. In like Manner, we pass to the next World through this; and the natural Life, in the Way of Virtue, is the Preparation for the Spiritual and Heavenly. This shews that as the next World is our proper Abode, so it ought to be the Subject of our first and principal Concern; and that to be solicitous about this World to the Neglect of the next, is a most unreasonable Conduct. Should a Babe in the Womb be able to act, and think, and con-

trive as a Man does; would it not make us smile to see the poor Trifler, fretful under its Confinement, and racking its Invention, to find out Ways to enlarge its narrow Dwelling, and make it more agreeable and commodious; when a few Months or Weeks perhaps, would shut up that Period which Nature has assigned for this State of Being? We are just such Triflers, when we attempt to mend the Lot that Providence hath appointed for us. There is the same moral Necessity for our bearing those Evils which God suffers to fall upon us for the Sake of a good Conscience, that there is natural Necessity for an Infant to bear its Confinement within the Womb. Help ourselves, perhaps, we may if we will act otherwise than we should act: But then we shall lose the Benefit of the Spiritual and Heavenly Life, and go abortive into the next World, as an Infant would come abortive into this, should it be able to break through its Confinement and be born before its Time. If the next World is our proper Abode, and a Life of Virtue the Way that leads to it; we must be contented to take our Lot here as it may happen. To walk on plain
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Ground is most desirable when it is safe; but who declines a rugged Path that leads him home to his House, and chuses a smooth one that will carry him to Bogs, or Precipices? Therefore, when we observe those who profess themselves the Citizens of Heaven, setting their Faces a contrary Way; reaching after this World with all their Attention and Might; watching for Wealth or for Pleasure, as for a Prey; now stooping down to the low Arts of Fraud and Flattery; then boldly and fearlessly adventuring upon the more open and scandalous Methods of Oppression and Violence; can we think them to be in earnest? There is a Care due to this World; for though we have here *no continuing City*, we have a temporary Abode. We are Travellers through this World to a better Country, and must provide ourselves with Accomodations during this State of Pilgrimage. But how? Why by such Means as shew that we are not forgetful of that better Country; that is by such Means as are consistent with Virtue, with Integrity, with Honour, with Benevolence, and all those Graces which help to adorn and fill up the Character of a

good Man. To act otherwise, is to destroy the very Means that should make the next World a Benefit to us; and is like the Folly of a Man who should set forward in his Journey to his own House and Family, and instead of contenting himself with a moderate Refreshment by the Way, should so exhaust his Substance, as not to leave himself a Groat for his Subsistence when he comes there. Virtue is as necessary to our future Happiness, as Money is to our comfortable Subsistence for the present. It is the Treasure of the next World, and without it we shall be poor and miserable. Therefore let us take care and husband it well; for the more of it we carry with us in the better State we shall live. It is reasonable to think, that as in this World Happiness is differently dispensed according to our different Use and Improvement of the Means put into our Hands, so it will be in the next. Virtue is the Acquisition of this Life; and it is the only good Thing we can carry with us beyond the Grave. If our Souls go into another World, our Virtues and our Vices must needs go with them; for they are the Habits of the Soul, as straitness

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or crookedness are the Habits of the Body. As our Virtues will make us happy, our Vices will make us miserable. We shall live, but we cannot have our Portion with God; we must have it in the *Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Rev. xxi. 8.

Would we lay these Thoughts home to our Hearts, and have them ready on all Occasions when Temptations beset us; we should feel their sovereign Virtue, both in allaying our Fondness for the good Things of this World, and in arming us with Patience to bear the Evils of it. Are you easy in your Circumstances? Have you Wealth, and Health, and Honour with all their pleasing Retinue? Use them with Moderation and Thankfulness; but let them not steal away your Heart; for consider how little they concern you. Remember, that these Things are not your Happiness, but simply your Accommodation till your Happiness comes. Yet a little while and you must leave them all behind you! *Wilt thou set thine Heart upon that which is not?* The Time draws on apace when these Things to Thee shall no

longer be. Do then as Travellers are wont to do, when they meet with something that is pleasing and entertaining by the Way. Make the best of them whilst you have Leisure to tarry: But when Virtue calls and bids you be hasting forward, turn your Back and be gone.

So as to the Evils of Life-----You are poor, you are naked, you are sick, you are afflicted----the proper Answer is at Hand. These Things are troublesome, but *the Time is short; and our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* 2 Cor. iv. 17. But *Patience* must have its perfect Work. Jam. i. 4. The very Merit of these Things lies in bearing them well. If we faint, if we grow weary, we lose our Reward. No doubt (as I have observed) if Men are not content in such Cases as these, it may sometimes be in their Power by evil Arts to help themselves. If they are poor, they may steal; if they are covetous, they may cheat; if they are oppressed and ill handled for an obstinate Virtue, they may comply. But what do they get? A Release from a momentary Affliction, to the Loss of an eternal

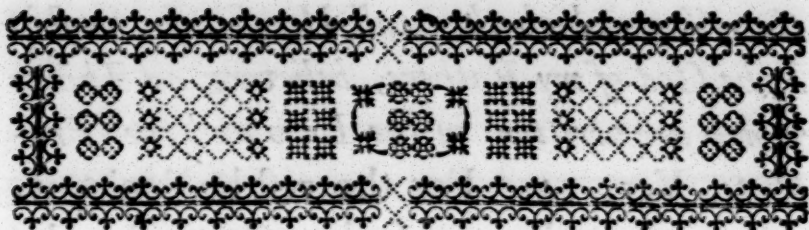
nal Recompence! The longest Life is but short. We are here, as it were, to-day; and are gone to-morrow; and when we die we shall leave all our Pains and Sorrows behind us; or if they accompany us we must bear them upon our own Shoulders. Should not this encourage us to be patient? Does a Traveller bid farewell to his Family, and to his Inheritance, because he has a little dirty Road to go through? Do we not compass Sea and Land; encounter Perils and Hardships of various Kinds, to make Provision for this frail and perishing Estate? Yes; but here it is that we want the Aid of Faith to make us believe what we do not, what we cannot, see. Our Minds are too narrow to comprehend Eternity, and view its Disproportion to the Time of this mortal Life. What we know of this Life, we know by Parts and Succession. We take Notice of every Moment that passes. We feel every Thing that touches us; but of what is yet to come we know nothing. This makes Life seem long, and the longer it will seem the less it pleases us. Here lies the Source of all our Uneasiness, for which there can be no perfect Cure. But
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it would receive great Abatements, if we would habituate ourselves to consider what Sort of Creatures we are, and for what Life we are made; without Attention to which, Faith will lie as it were dead, and all its Power and Virtue will be lost. All who believe in Christ must know, that *here we have no continuing City, but seek one to come.* But if we never think of it, it will be same Thing as if we knew it not. And this we get by being so busy after the Things of this World, as not to allow Time to enter into ourselves; which brings us into a Habit of acting as if we were what we are not. Whilst we are thus carelessly disposed, we are very ill prepared to bear the Reproach of Christ; for if our Virtues hold out whilst no Temptation befalls us beyond what is common, they will certainly fail us in fierce and boisterous Attacks, when the World offers large Bribes to corrupt our Integrity. When Power holds forth to us her golden Sceptre, and Honour courts us with her gawdy Train; when Riches or Pleasures lay open to us their Stores and invite us to come in and take our Fill; or when Persecution lifts up her bloody Ensign,

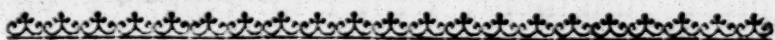
sign, and the Terrors of the World set themselves in Array against us; an undisciplined Mind will be no more able to steer a safe and a steady Course, than a Ship at Sea is to weather a Storm, whose Tackling is broke, or whose Pilot is fast asleep. It is a great Mistake to think, that because it must always be reasonable to prefer heavenly Things to earthly, therefore it is a very easy Matter. St. Paul tells us how He learned this great Lesson; it was by *mortifying the Body and bringing it into Subjection*. 1 Cor. ix. 27. It was by having his *Conversation in Heaven*. Phil. iii. 20. It was by *looking, not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen*. 2 Cor. iv. 18. And let us all *look up steadfastly* to that high and holy Place where God dwelleth, and *Jesus sitteth at the right Hand of God*. And when a lively Faith has purified our Hearts; when we shall have conquered the Temptations from within, and the Snares from without, and attained the true Liberty of the Sons of God; we may take our Leave of this World with great Consolation. Death will have much to give us; nothing to take from us that is worth our Concern. It is true, there is in the Thought of Death some-

something hideous and shocking to Nature; the Providence of God having wisely implanted in us a Desire of Life, that we may not throw it away before our Time, which we should be very apt to do when Life grows to be uneasy and burdensome. But when we have lived enough for ourselves (that is for our Virtues) enough for our Families and Friends, and enough for God; it is Mercy in him to release us hence. Why, when the Victory is won, should we desire to be withheld from receiving the Crown?



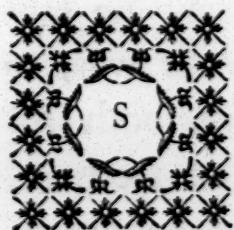


S E R M O N XIV.



ACTS xxiv. 16.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Men.



T. Paul was now brought before Felix the Roman Governor, by Ananias the High Priest, and the Elders of the Jews; who accused him of being *a pestilent Fellow, a Mover of Sedition, and a Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*, as the Christians in those Days were called by Way of Reproach. This last Part of the Charge he confesses; and justifies himself by alledging the Authority of their own Prophets. *This I confess unto thee, that after*
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the Way which they call Hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets, Ver. 14. For the reſt he denies it; and to ſhew how ill ſuch a Conduct as he was charged with would ſtand with his Profeſſion, he opens the great Article of his Faith, the Reſurrection, and a future Judgment, which he obſerves was not peculiar to him as a Chriſtian, but common to him and to his Accuſers, who profeſſed the Belief of it as well as he. I have Hope towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt; in Conſequence of which Belief, he ſays his conſtant Study and Endeavour was, to have a Conſcience void of Offence, both toward God and toward Men. You ſee here, that the Apoſtle ſets forth the Judgment of the laſt Day, as the Judgment of Conſcience. For no other Reason can ſhew the Care of Conſcience to keep it void of Offence, to be a Conduct properly reſulting from the Belief of a future Judgment, than this, that Conſcience ſhall then be judged. This is the Point I mean to ſpeak to; and it will be proper to enquire in the
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first Place, what Conscience is, and when we understand this, it will very easily be perceived what Sort of Judgment the Judgment of Conscience must be.

Conscience is that Judgment which the Mind passeth upon its own Actions as agreeable to, or differing from the Will or Law of God. Where observe,

1. That the Mind hath a Law; which is the Will of God. It is our Reason, assisted by his Word, that enables us to discern what God commands and what he forbids; and this is properly the Law to Man. Observe,

2. That as the Mind hath a Knowledge or Consciousness of God's Law; so it hath a Power within itself to conform with, or vary from it. This consists in the Determination of the Will, which if it agrees with the Will of God as known or understood, the Law is fulfilled; if it differs from it, the Man immediately becomes a Transgressor. It is not necessary that any external Act should follow. For the external Act is but the mere Motion of the corporeal Instrument as directed by the Will, in which there is nothing moral or immoral. When an Action is intended,

ed, it is done by being intended; which is the Foundation of that Rule of our Saviour, Matt. v. 28. *Whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* So it is in all other Caſes. If a Man has the Will to murder or to ſteal, and wants only the Opportunity, he is a Murderer or a Thief. If he has the Will to do a charitable Action and wants the Ability, he has the whole Merit of the Action, though he doth it not. The Reaſon is, becauſe the Mind is the only active Principle in Man. The Body does but obey its Motions, as a Horſe obeys his Rider, or as a Weapon obeys the Hand of him that uſes it.

From hence then it follows, that the Judgment of the laſt Day, being the Judgment of Conſcience, will be the Judgment (not of the outward Behaviour only, but) of the moſt ſecret Motions and Determinations of the Soul; according to that of Solomon Eccleſ. xii. 14. *God ſhall bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret Thing, whether it be Good or whether it be Evil.* Nay, to ſpeak more exactly, it will be the Judgment of the internal Conduct

duct only, and not at all of the outward Behaviour. St. Paul tells us, *we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body*, that is, receive the proper Recompence for the Things done in his Body. 2 Cor. v. 10. By whom, or by what, done in the Body? Why, by the Man, by the Soul, whilst it was in the Body. The Mind is properly the Man. It is the Soul whilst in the Body, that doth either Good or Evil; and it is the Soul, again cloathed in the Body, that shall stand in Judgment. And if the Soul is to be judged, its Actions must be judged, whether secret or open, whether compleated in the Will or Intention only, or brought to Execution. This makes a great Difference between the Judgment of Men, and the Judgment of God: Between the Decisions of earthly Tribunals, and the Decision of the great Day. Men judge the outward Act as witnessing the inward Disposition: But God wants not this Testimony; for *all Things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do*. Heb. iv. 13.

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You see then, that Conscience hath two Judges; God, and its own self. Every Man knows his own Heart; and if he knows it to be bad, God knows it to be so too. *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart and knoweth all Things. But if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.* 1 John iii. 20, 21. The Judgment of Conscience upon itself, is the Prefage of God's future and final Judgment; which is the Reason of what the Apostle says, *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* 1 Cor. xi. 31. But no Man can judge another's Conscience, because he knoweth not the Workings and Determinations of his Conscience, otherwise than by the outward Conduct, which is no sure, infallible Interpreter. And therefore when St. Paul says, *I exercise myself to have always a Conscience void of Offence, toward God and toward Men*, you must not understand him as referring to Men the Judgment of his Conscience; but as meaning, that in all Points of Duty, whether they concerned God, or whether they concerned Men, he made it his Study to behave in
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such a Manner as to justify himself to God and to his own Conscience.

When God judgeth the Actions of Conscience, it is to be understood that he considereth them with all their Circumstances. For God judgeth the Actions of Conscience as morally good or bad. But it is from Circumstances that Actions take their moral Nature; insomuch that the self-same Action will be either good, bad, or indifferent, as Circumstances vary. For Example; to feed the Hungry, and to cloath the Naked, if you do it out of pure Love to God and your Neighbour, is Charity; if you do it to please your Vanity, and catch at the Applause of Men, it is nothing. To worship God in the Use of his Ordinances, when it comes from a serious and devout Mind, is an acceptable Service; but when it is done to gain a Fame of Sanctity, that we may offend in other Points with less Suspicion, it is a wicked Thing. At the Judgment of the great Day, these, and such like Cases, which lie confused in this World, will exactly be distinguished, and every Action weighed with its proper Circumstances. *The Lord*

is a God of Knowledge who weigheth the Actions and the Spirits of Men. He is like Refiners Fire, and as a Refiner shall he sit, to sever the Dross from the pure Metal, and to gather out of his Kingdom all Things that offend. And who may abide the Day of his coming ! Who shall stand when he appeareth, before whom every Heart will be laid open, and where neither the fly Sinner, nor the fawning Hypocrite, will find a Refuge to shelter them from the sure Vengeance of God ! You will there see many Virtues rewarded, which never could be brought to Light in this World ; many Sins punished, which lay hid under the Disguise of Actions in Appearance only good. You will see Numbers commended of God who have stood condemned by Men ; and Numbers again rejected of God, who have been approved and admired by Men. This will be a surprising Change in the Face of Things, comfortable to all good Men, but dreadful to Sinners. Now the Use that I intend to make of this is, to shew you the great Value of a sincere and upright Mind, as it is that which, however it may accidentally lay us open to Inconveniencies in this World, is the only Thing that can
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qualify us to stand in Judgment before God at the last Day.

When we speak of a sincere Man, or a Man of Integrity, (which are Expressions equivalent) we mean one who is what he appears to be; who speaks as he thinks, and does what in his own Mind and Persuasion he judges to be right. Such a one was the Apostle. He was persuaded that preaching the Gospel was preaching God's Truth; of which he gave this plain convincing Proof to all Mankind, that he suffered all Manner of Persecution, and at last laid down his Life, for the Gospel Sake. Time was when he was of another Opinion, as he says in his Apology before Agrippa. *I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many Things contrary to the Name of Jesus.* Acts xxvi. 9. And what did he do in Consequence of this Persuasion? He tells us, with great Concern, in the following Verses: *Many of the Saints did I shut up in Prison, having received Authority from the chief Priests; and when they were put to Death I gave my Voice against them. And I punished them oft in every Synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them I persecuted them*

even unto strange Cities. Upon which Case he speaks elsewhere and says----*I obtained Mercy because I did it ignorantly in Unbelief.* 1 Tim. i. 13. The Conduct differed in each Case, but the Man was the same; always true to his Judgment or Persuasion. Whilst he was an Unbeliever he persecuted the Christians, as the other Jews did; after he was converted, he suffered Persecution himself; both upon the same Principle, that he might not offend Conscience. And this is a Rule we should all of us lay down to ourselves; that our Conscience must be our Guide. For God will judge us according to our Consciences. It is one (and an essential) Part of Sincerity to see that Conscience be rightly informed so far as the Means we have will enable us; for he that is not honestly persuaded, can never act honestly in Pursuance of such Persuasion. And therefore it is not enough for a Man to say, I do this, or, I do that, because I am in Conscience so persuaded: He must go a Step farther and ask---Upon what Grounds, or for what Reasons am I thus persuaded? Have I taken that Care to inform myself that I ought to do?---And if we can honestly
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and properly answer to this Point, though we may not justify ourselves, we are sure of a Plea that will favourably be accepted by our merciful Judge. When Abimelech took Abraham's Wife, he *pleaded the Integrity of his Heart*, and his Plea was accepted. Gen. xx. 5. 6. David calls upon God to *judge him according to his Righteousness, and according to the Integrity that was in him*. Psalm vii. 8. St. Paul's rejoicing was *the Testimony of his Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, he had had his Conversation in the World*. 2 Cor. i. 12. And how greatly does it concern all who, with him, *have Hope towards God that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead both the Just and Unjust*, to have the same Testimony within themselves? For what can fleshly Wisdom do? It may save us the Advantages of this World; it may cover us from the Reproaches and Insults of bad Men; but it cannot hide us from the Knowledge of the Almighty, nor screen us from his Wrath, when he shall come to take Vengeance on all the Workers of Iniquity. Had not St. Paul, with the Rest of the Apostles, his Fellow-Labourers and Sufferers in the

Gospel, been under the full Influence of this Principle, fleshly Wisdom would have prevailed, as it would have stood them in more Stead than their godly Sincerity. It was not difficult for them to see which Way to divert that Storm of Persecution that was gathering every where around them. It was but to dissemble their Opinions; it was but to forbear preaching Christ; and they would have been safe. But they dared not to be found false before God, and therefore they would not dissemble with Men; but preached the Gospel under all Hazards, *esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of the whole World; for they had a Respect unto the Recompence of Reward.* Heb. xi. 26. And to this we should all of us have Regard in every Action of our Lives. We may serve a present Turn by a crafty, insincere Conduct; by being false to our Promises, or to our Oaths; by betraying our Trusts; by falling in with the Follies or Vices of Men; and by making large Professions of Friendship when we mean nothing: But these are but temporary Expedients, which will expose us to so much the greater Reproach, when the Secrets of the Heart shall

shall be disclosed, and Conscience and all its Actions come to stand in open Day-Light.

Of how great Value a sincere and upright Heart is in the Sight of God, we may judge by the Esteem it has amongst Men. If we are convinced that a Person means us well, we love and honour him, how little soever it may be in his Power to do us real Good. The Will is accepted as the Deed; but the Deed is of no Account with us if the Will is wanting. Let him do ever so many beneficial Actions, if there is no real Kindness at Bottom, it passes for nothing. The Benefit may be accepted, but the Man will be despised. Why should we think that God will judge otherwise of us, in such Cases, than we judge of one another? The Judgment of Men, when it is the Judgment of right Reason, must be the Judgment of God, who is the Perfection of Reason; and it will more certainly be the Judgment of God, as he most certainly knows whatever is wrong in the Heart to abate or destroy the Merit of Actions seemingly good and praise-worthy. All Men are naturally partial to themselves; and when an insincere Conduct is attended with beneficial

ficial or with pleasing Consequences; when it ministers to our Wants, or courts our Ambition, or sooths our Vanity; these are so many Bribes to blind our Eyes and hide the Deceit. But sure it is, that if the vainest Creature upon Earth could see the Flatterer's Heart, as plainly and as nakedly as God sees it, he would loath and abhor him. A deceitful Heart is like a painted Face; frightful when, stript of the Daubings and Disguises of Art, it appears in its proper and natural Hue. And is God the only Person that cannot see this Deformity in human Nature, or that seeing it will not judge it? God wanteth neither us nor ours. He is untouched with every Passion, and every Imperfection, that makes Us slow to discern or easy to excuse. He made us for our own Good not for His; and all he requires from us is to *give him our Hearts*. Prov. xxiii. 26. It is a great Thing to give him I must confess; and yet it is the least Thing we can give him too. For if we give him not this we give him nothing.

Let us then, having all of us this *Hope in God that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead both of the Just and of the Unjust*, exercise ourselves, with the Apostle,

to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Men. Let us attend to Conscience in every Thing that we do, and never determine so much as in Thought and Intention, without asking ourselves this Question, *How shall I answer this at the Tribunal of Christ?* This it is to *exercise* ourselves in this Lesson; to make it the constant Care and Study of our Lives; the leading Principle of our Actions. And when we thus stand clear in Conscience, our outward Behaviour will be without Offence. He that studies this Lesson, can never be a Thief, or a Knave, or a Whoremonger, or an Extortioner; for though the Darknes covers him, or the secret Corners hide him; though Men cannot censure, or Laws punish him; yet full well he knows that he standeth under the all-searching Eye of God, whose Judgment he cannot escape.

And as this Principle secures our Conduct towards Men, so it does our Behaviour towards God, in all Points which concern his Religion and Worship. Here it is more especially that we should take Care to act with Sincerity, because in this it is that the whole Force and Virtue of Religion
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lies. A Man may be beneficial to his Neighbour, whether he be sincere or not; but he cannot be beneficial to God. Man seeth only the outward Action; and if this is right he can impeach us in nothing, howsoever the Heart may be inwardly disposed. But when we have to do with God, we have immediate Concern with the Searcher of Hearts; and to appear before him with a disaffected, undutiful Mind, is to affront him to his Face. The outward Profession, Him considered, is absolutely nothing. With this, Men are concerned and Men only; and if the Heart and the Profession go not together, we are chargeable as Hypocrites before Men, but in the Sight of God we stand as declared Rebels. To Him the Heart speaks its own Language, and tells him as plainly as if the Tongue spoke it out in so many Words, that it has no Regard for him.

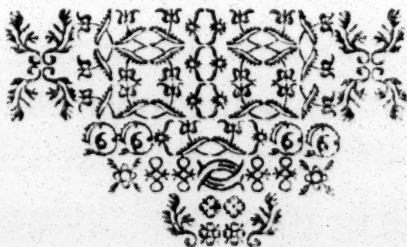
This Account agrees with God's own Declaration by the Prophet Samuel, in the Case of King Saul, recorded 1 Sam. xv. 22, 24, *Hath the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat*

Fat of Rams. For Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornness as Iniquity and Idolatry. God had commanded Saul utterly to destroy a wicked Nation, the Amalekites; to *slay both Man and Woman, Infant and Suckling, Ox and Sheep, Camel and Ass.* But Saul spared the best of the Sheep and of the Oxen, and of the Fatlings---(as he said afterwards) *to sacrifice unto the Lord.* Here was a specious Pretence, but no Sincerity. The true Motive was Luxury and Covetousness. Therefore God rejects him with Scorn, and treats him as a Rebel. His Sin was his Disobedience, which would have been Disobedience, though he had offered up the whole Prey he had taken in Sacrifice. Not unlike to this is another Passage of the Prophet Micah, Chap. vi. Vers. 6, 7, 8, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil?---He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* An humble

ble and contrite Heart, which makes the Law of God the Rule and Measure of its Actions, is the only available Sacrifice we can offer to him. This is true Worship, as saith the Prophet Isaiah, Chap. lxvi. Vers. 2, *To this Man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* Without this devout Temper of Mind, *he that killeth an Ox is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that offereth an Oblation as if he offered Swine's Blood; he that burneth Incense as he that blesseth an Idol---*and, let me add, he that prayeth, will be as he that blasphemeth, and he that giveth Thanks, as he that reproacheth his Maker. The meer outward Work, if the Heart is naught within, will make no Change in our Condition, as it will appear to the Judge of Conscience. It will but leave us (at best) as it found us; and let us consider how miserable it will be to appear before God destitute of every saving Grace; and how little it will avail us to have carried a fair Appearance to the World, when the World itself shall fail us, and a new World comes to open itself to our View, which
can

can never fail, but in which we have neither Lot nor Portion ! Why do we endeavour to hide our bad Actions from the Knowledge of Men, but because we are afraid of the Judgment of Men ? This World is in this Respect an Emblem to us of the next. The Law is appointed as the Security for Peace and Property ; and the Magistrate beareth the Sword for the Punishment of Evil-Doers. But what says Christ ? *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But---fear him which after he hath killed hath Power to cast into Hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Luke xii. 4, 5. Our Actions we may sometimes conceal from the Notice of Men : But Conscience cannot hide itself from the Judge of Conscience ; and if it be so dreadful to fall into the Hands of Men, and to suffer those Pains and Penalties, which must all have an End with this mortal Life ; think how *fearful a Thing* it must be *to fall into the Hands of the living God*, who hath in himself the Power of Eternity, as well to punish as to reward ! Happy for us, if such Notices as these ; such Preludes of the great Day (which all Images taken from human Things,

Things can but very imperfectly represent) would prevail upon us to look into ourselves, and purge our Hearts from every Thing that may be offensive in the Eyes of our Heavenly Father; that so we may lay down our Flesh in Hope, and when the appointed Time shall come, be made Partakers of a happy and joyful Resurrection!



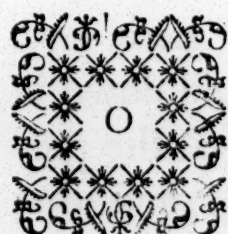


S E R M O N XV.



MATTHEW XV. 19.

*For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts,
Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Theft,
false Witness, Blasphemies;
These are the Things which defile a Man.*

 UR Saviour was led to this
Observation by a Question put
to him by the Scribes and
Pharisees, *Why do thy Disci-
ples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?
For they wash not their Hands when they eat
Bread.* The Reason of their asking this
Question was, that they ignorantly and su-
perstitiously believed, that by eating Bread
with unwashen Hands, a Man contracted
some moral Pollution; for so our Saviour's
S Answer

Answer imports. *Not that which goeth into the Mouth defileth a Man, but that which cometh out of the Mouth; this defileth a Man.*

Verse 11. The Explanation of this Answer follows in the Words of the Text connected with the foregoing Verse. *Those Things which proceed out of the Mouth come forth from the Heart, and they defile the Man. For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemies; these are the Things which defile a Man.*

I shall not stay here to confute the idle Conceit of the Jews, that there is or can be any Religion in a Man's washing or not washing his Hands when he sits down to Meat. But what our Saviour here says, fully confirms what has been laid down in the foregoing Discourse, viz. That the proper Seat of Sin is the Heart; and that when Sin is compleated in the Heart, it has all the Malignity that human Power can give it. A Murderer in his Heart; an Adulterer or Fornicator in his Heart; a Thief in his Heart; a false Witness in his Heart; a Blasphemer in his Heart; is absolutely and compleatly a Murderer, an Adulterer, a Fornicator, a Thief, a false Witness,

Witness, a Blasphemer. And these, I conceive, are (principally at least) those evil Thoughts which our Saviour says, *defile a Man*. But there are evil Thoughts of another Kind which sometimes give great Disturbance to serious Minds; and which I now mean to speak to.

I have known those (nor is it an uncommon Case) who though they have the worthiest Notions of God and his Providence, the general State of their Minds considered; and though in all Respects they live like Christians; yet on some Occasions (more or less frequent) complain, that such Thoughts of God obtrude themselves upon them as their very Souls abhor, and all Endeavours to get rid of them are vain and without Effect. This fills their Minds with Horror and Despair. They fancy that their very Prayers are an Abomination; that they are abandoned of God, and given up to the Power of the Devil; and yet all the while they can charge their Consciences with no particular Offence, except only in this single Point which they look upon to be the greatest of all Offences; nothing less than the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Let us try what this Kind of evil Thoughts will amount to.

In the first Place it is clear that the Will hath nothing to do with them. For the very Case supposes, that they come in without being called, and are received when they come, with Abhorrence and Detestation. They are not Resolutions and Determinations of the rational Mind, but simple Apprehensions or Conceptions of Things, than which nothing is less in our own Power. When the rational Mind deliberates upon any Thing; when it approves; when it resolves; this implies an Act of the Will. But naked Conceptions or Apprehensions of Things are not under the Direction of the Will. They present themselves to us as well when we are sleeping as when we are waking; and depend upon a thousand accidental Occasions, which it may not be in our Power either to foresee or to prevent. If I should hear a Man cursing and blaspheming in the Streets, I must have those evil Conceptions in my Mind if I attend to what he says. But does any Man look upon such Conceptions so occasioned as criminal in himself? No: And why? Why, because his Will has no Share in them.

them. What strikes upon the external Senses the Mind must perceive, supposing the Organs rightly disposed. Thus far therefore there can be nothing criminal. But if what is thus occasionally and forcibly obtruded upon me meets with my good Liking and Approbation, I then make it my own Act, and so far, and no farther, it is imputable to me. For if Will and Choice be the very essential Point that constitutes a moral Action, it will follow that Moral or Immoral, Good or Evil, must bear a constant equal Proportion to the Share the Will has in every Thought or Action. If blasphemous, or otherwise wicked, Discourse (howsoever seasoned by Wit and Humour) pleases me; if I seek and delight in the Company of those who so accustom themselves; their evil Thoughts are mine too, and I make myself Partaker in their Sin. But, Consent excluded, mere Conceptions in this Case are not so properly evil Thoughts, as Thoughts or Conceptions about evil Things: Evil in those from whose Will they come, but as indifferent to those, as to any moral Turpitude, who through their Act only receive the Notice of Information of them, as it is to have the Per-

ception of Heat when they hold their Hands to the Fire, or of Sound when the Thunders roar, or the Rain and Hail rattle upon the Ground.

The Case I have now put, and in the Resolution of which no one finds any Difficulty, is nearer to the Case in Hand, than may at first Sight be imagined. They are in Truth one and the same with this simple Difference, that when I hear another blaspheming God, the Thoughts are obtruded upon me by an external Cause; but when, not only without but even against my Will, such Thoughts arise in my own Mind, they are obtruded upon me by some internal Perturbation. But whilst you confess in both Cases that the Thoughts are alike involuntary, be the Cause obtruding them upon us external or internal, it will come to the same Reckoning. There are Causes within us to raise Ideas in the Mind which it is as little in our Power to check as it is to bridle another Man's Tongue. We can no more hinder the Heart from beating, by a mere Act of the Will, than by a like Act we can stop the Pendulum of of a Clock. From this first Mover, the Blood and Humours of the Body receive their Motions, Directions and Combinations ;

tions ; all independent of the human Will, all disposed to raise Sensations in the Body, pleasing or painful. And as these inward Causes affect the Senses without asking us Leave, so they may the Operations of the Mind. We see it daily in many Cases. In Fevers, in Lunacies, in all the various Species of Melancholy. Now if what certainly may be, really should be the Case, that these evil Thoughts arise from some bodily Distemper not in your Power ; how is it that you are more ready to charge yourself with Guilt, than you would be if you felt a Pain in your Head or Toe ? But suppose the worst (as Persons of this Cast are always ready to fancy the worst of themselves) that these evil Thoughts are really the Suggestions of the Devil, what is it to You so long as you are not consenting to his Temptations ? When evil Thoughts are suggested by bad Men, and are received with Abhorrence, whom do we blame ? Not ourselves, who are but passive in the Case, but the Wretch that suggests them. In like Manner, when the Devil suggests blasphemous Thoughts, which are received with the like Abhorrence, Him we are to condemn, not

Ourselves; for He is the Blasphemer and not We.

But though this Resolution of the Case, may and ought to satisfy Conscience, I do not expect it should Cure the Uneasiness and Vexation of such a State of Mind. As it must be very disagreeable to a good Man, to be confined to Company where he shall hear nothing but cursing and swearing; it must be much more so to bear the Causes, exciting such odious Conceptions within our Breasts; which we cannot shake off as we may a troublesome Companion, and which haunt and torment us in our Beds, and our most private Retirements. Add to this, that the same internal Disorders, which occasion these evil Thoughts, constantly produce unnatural Fears, Anxieties, Dejections, and Anguish of Mind, which strike us with Horror and Dread of the divine Wrath, though in our Reasons and Consciences, we are satisfied that we are in nothing criminal. This State of the Mind is as much a Disease, as a Fit of the Stone or Gout; and you may as well look to Cure the one by Reason and Argument as the other. Accordingly these Disorders have their Periods
and

and Intervals as many other Distempers of the Body have, even whilst the moral State of the Mind hath suffered no Change; which shews plainly enough that the moral Man hath nothing to do with them. It is therefore evident that Cases of this Sort, fall a great deal more properly under the Care of the Physician of the Body, than the Physician of the Soul, who can give no other Advice than this.-----Bear with Patience what God is pleased to lay upon you. We see in Fact and Experience, that Disorders of this Kind will yield to Time and proper Applications as other Distempers do; and if they are harder to be borne than most other Distempers are, (which I can very easily conceive to be true) still we must remember that God hath not left it to Us to chuse our own Burdens. Nevertheless, because the Exercise of Patience in Afflictions of every Kind, will greatly depend upon the right Conduct of ourselves; something I shall briefly offer, which those who are in Health will do well to bear in Mind to be of Use to themselves or their Friends under the Pressure of such Calamities.

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The capital Point is this.-----Never suffer yourself to entertain an Opinion, that Thoughts thus obtruded against your Will, can possibly be Sins, or render you obnoxious to the Displeasure of Almighty God. You may as well say that it is a Sin to have a Fever or the Small-Pox, as that those Disorders of the Imagination are sinful which arise from a distemper'd State of Blood. I am very sensible it is difficult for Persons to beat such Apprehensions out of their Minds, when Melancholly has laid fast hold upon them. But as this is a Case in which Error will always be on the unfavourable Side, they must learn not to believe themselves. They must (whilst under these Disorders) trust to the Opinion of their Minister, or their Friends about them, as blind Men follow their Guides; nor suffer themselves to dispute or question what they are not qualified to judge of as they should do. Or perhaps they may be able to correct their present Judgment, by what they can recollect of themselves, when they were in a different Temper. A Man that has got the Jaundice knows that he sees wrong, when he sees all Things yellow, by recollecting how the same Things appeared to him

him when he was in a healthy Condition. Melancholly is to the Mind, what the Jaundice is to the Eyes: Whilst we are under its Influence we see nothing right; and therefore our present Judgments are never to be relied on, but to be neglected as Dreams and Delusions. But our natural Ways of thinking are the Dictates of Reason, in Things that are within our Compass; and if there be any Thing plain to the lowest Understanding it is this, that we are not accountable for what we cannot help. It may seem very strange perhaps, that a Person who shews Reason and Understanding in every other respect, should be capable of being imposed upon in this single Point. And strange indeed it is. But we see as strange Things every Day. It is not more plain that there can be no Sin without an Act of the Will, than that a Man cannot reason and dispute without a reasoning Faculty. And yet I have heard a Case (and I have full Evidence of the Truth of it) of a learned, and ingenious Man, who was firmly perswaded that he had lost his human Soul, and that he was without any one Idea or Thought, perfect or imperfect, that could bespeak
him

him a reasonable Creature.---Again, how absurd would it be for a Man to torture himself with Apprehensions that he is under God's Displeasure, because he fancies he does not love him, or fear him, or has no Faith in him! For if a Man says and laments that he is a Sinner against God, because he does not believe in him; he shews by that very Act, that he does believe in him. Yet are such Instances frequent; and should you ask any of these unhappy Persons in what Instances they have offended, they will tell you they can charge their Consciences with nothing; that they do their best to serve God faithfully, and would not willingly offend him, even in their Thoughts. Is not this to love and fear God? Such Cases as these should help to cure one another; and when we are convinced how much it is in the Power of the Imagination, to impose upon and harrafs the Understanding, in Cases in which we ourselves are made sensible of the Cheat; we should be the more apt to distrust ourselves in other Cases, in which our own Infirmities being interested and concerned, the Fallacy may lie concealed from us.

Would

Would Men under such afflicting Circumstances, open their Minds to these Sort of Reflections, and consider their melancholly Thoughts in no other Light than as frightful Dreams, they would find it to be a great Mitigation of their Uneasinesses. But when all is done that can be done, something will remain which nothing but Time will cure, which works Changes in our bodily Constitutions, as it does in every Thing else. As to Applications of the religious Kind, perhaps there may be less room for them in these Cases, than there is in many other Calamities incident to the human Nature. Not for a Reason that Men of this Turn are ever apt to suggest to themselves, that their religious Performances contract any Defilement from these evil Thoughts; but because they are not in a fit Temper and Disposition for them, and by turning them into Superstition, are wont to multiply Troubles upon themselves. Every good Christian, no doubt thinks himself obliged daily to worship God by Prayer. But if a Man was light-headed with a Fever, would you send him to his Closet, or would you confine him to his Bed, and keep him quiet? Melancholly

cholly Men are of all others most inclined to Devotion ; but they are many Times as unfit for it, as Persons otherwise disordered in their Understandings. They scarce know when they pray often enough, or long enough, or with Zeal enough ; and when they take Offence at themselves, in any of these Respects, they are sure to find the Punishment of the imaginary Fault in their Afflictions, which makes the Malady so much the worse. In this Point therefore there is need of Discretion, and the kind Assistance of Friends, to observe what it is that we can, and what we cannot bear ; for this is a Rule that holds in all Cases and can never fail, that God will expect no more from us, than he has qualified us to perform. So long as we can pray with Comfort and Improvement we do well ; but if our Circumstances and Infirmities considered, our Prayers engage the Attention longer than is fit ; if they call in those uneasy Thoughts, which it is proper to keep at a Distance from us ; or if they minister the Occasions of new Fears and Jealousies, when we have more upon us already, than we know how to deal

deal with; 'tis Religion as well as Prudence to forbear.

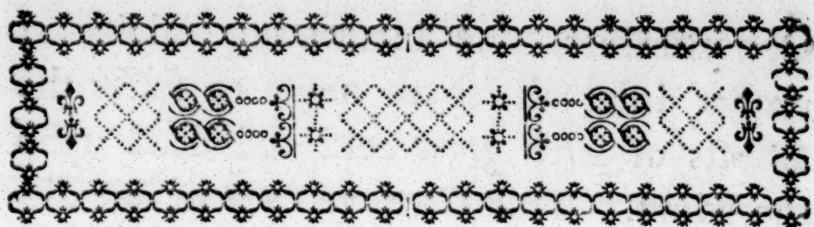
What has been said of Prayer may be applied to Reading and Meditation. They should be allowed so far as is suitable, and no farther. Much poring upon Books is generally found to be prejudicial in such Cases, especially upon religious Subjects, with which the Mind is already too much occupied for the Measure of its present Strength, and wants rather to be diverted, and, as it were called from itself, by more indifferent and amusing Speculations. It matters not how little you think upon religious Subjects, while you are not in a Condition to think of them properly. The Exercise of some honest Calling, or innocent Recreations, are for this Season much better Employments. But whether you read or pray, take Heed not to fancy that these Exercises operate as Charms; nor think the worse of yourself because you do not find immediate Relief from them. God has taught us to *call upon Him in the Time of Trouble*, and that he will *bear us too*; but it must be in his own good Time, and in his own Way, not in the Way that we perhaps may most wish for
our-

ourselves. It pleases God to exercise the best of his Servants by Afflictions; and whilst we consider this as an Affliction, not as our Sin (which is the true Way of considering it) there will be Room for all those comfortable Reflections to support us under it, that are proper on all other Occasions.

I have said thus much for the Satisfaction of all who may chance to mourn under such unhappy Circumstances; though after all I am sensible that when the Mind is under so much Disorder, it is not much that Reason and Argument can do. But something it may do when Advice is conducted with Prudence and Discretion. If there are any Cases in which good Counsel is necessary, they are these; and therefore I would by no Means advise Persons, in this State of Mind, to stifle their Uneasinesses (which by being pent up will press so much the more) but to open their Hearts to those in whom they have most Confidence, in which they will alway find some present Relief, though it may not be of long Continuance. But the shortest Intervals of Comfort are not to be despised. To gain Time in these Cases is to do much; and this we shall obtain by watching our Oppor-

Opportunities, and inculcating Advice at proper Intervals, so as never to suffer the Effects of it to grow cold and dead upon the Mind. This Care we owe to our distressed Friends. This Debt no good Man will be unwilling to pay; and if what I have said upon this Subject may serve to furnish those who are so charitably disposed with proper Hints on such Occasions, it is all I can expect. May God preserve us all from this great Affliction, and give us the Spirit of a sound Mind; for the Sake of Jesus Christ.



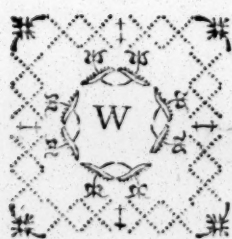


S E R M O N XVI.



LUKE XV. 32.

It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy Brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found.



WE find, at the first and second Verses of this Chapter, the Pharisees and Scribes murmuring against Christ, and saying, *this Man receiveth Sinners and eateth with them.* Instead of giving a direct Answer to this Cavil, our Saviour shews them in several Parables, the great Value of Repentance in the Sight of God: From whence the Construction was easy and natural, that in conversing with Sinners, in order to bring them to Repentance, he was
very

very properly employed. That of the Prodigal Son (to which the Text refers) though last in Order, is the most full and circumstantial, and therefore I shall begin with it; taking the several Parts of it, as they lie in the Course of the Story, and raising such Observations upon each of them as they naturally suggest.

A certain Man had two Sons; and the younger of them said to his Father, Father give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his Living. The Parable goes upon the Supposition, that though the elder Son, (according to the common Custom of Nations) was the Heir of the Family; yet every Child had an equitable Right to a Share in his Father's Substance. The Son does not prescribe to his Father how much he should give him; but makes a general Request to have his Share, leaving it (as it was meet) to the Father's Wisdom and Goodness to determine the Proportion. The Father consents to the Son's Request, and divides among his two Sons his Substance; which does not mean that they had both an equal Share, but that having considered his Cir-

cumstances, and how much it was fit his younger Son should have, he gave it to him, reserving the Rest for his own Maintenance, and as the Inheritance of the elder Son, who still continued in the Father's Family, as the Sequel of the Story shews.

There is something unpromising in this Request of the younger Son. There is a Time when younger Sons must be sent out, to learn to shift for themselves: But in this Point wife and good Children are wont to consult their Parents, and to take from them Advice, as well as ask Assistance; which seems not to have been the Case here. For the Son does not refer it to the Father's Discretion whether he judged it proper that he should go, or whether he thought it fit that he should stay longer in his Family; but determines for himself what he would do, and then comes to his Father with an Air of Discontent, and demands rather than asks him to give him his Portion. *Father give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me.* What was the Cause of this Impatience the Circumstances of the Parable very plainly shew us. He was uneasy under

der his Confinement, and in haste to be at his own Disposol. But why? The Father was neither niggardly nor severe. His readiness in complying with his Son's Request (who came to him in no very dutiful Manner) is an evident Proof of his Indulgence, which afterwards appeared in the strongest and most amiable Light, when ruined and undone by his own Folly and Wickedness, he came to ask his Forgiveness. Something then was bad in the Spirit and Temper of the young Man, which made him more hasty than was meet. The Event will shew this; for *not many Days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous living.* Ver. 13. It was not enough for the young Prodigal to get out of his Father's House, unless he could remove himself quite out of his Reach. He knew his own Inclination, and the Course he intended to steer; in which he was sure to meet with frequent Checks and Rebukes from his Father, if he continued within the Verge of his Observation. Therefore he goes *into a far Country*, where nobody might be at Hand to disturb or molest

him: A sure Mark of a profligate and abandoned Mind! a Mind that hates to be reformed, from which every Thing that is bad is to be expected. The Issue agrees with this setting out. He quickly *wasted his Substance in riotous living with Harlots*; (as it is said Ver. 30.) those greedy and merciless Devourers of thoughtless, extravagant young Men! See now the sad Conclusion. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in Want; and he went and joined himself to a Citizen of that Country; and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine. And he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat, and no Man gave unto him.* These Circumstances are added, to represent to us the Wretchedness of his Condition in the stronger Light; and are a fit Emblem of the Drudgery of vicious Courses. An exhausted Fortune, is of itself Famine enough to make a Man miserable. But whilst others have Plenty, the most worthless of Mankind may find some Relief from common Charity, especially the youngest Sons of good Families, who are not often reduced to the Necessity of getting
their

their Bread by submitting to the lowest Offices in Life. But when the Rich can scarce live, the Poor in many Instances must be left to starve; and this was now the young Man's Case, who for a Subsistence, was forced to undertake the vile Office of feeding Swine; for poor Wages, we may be sure, when he would have been glad to have been their Mess-mate as well as Keeper, but could not get enough even of this miserable Food to fill his Belly. These Husks seem to have been a Sort of coarse unwholesome Fruit like our Acorns; which in a Time of great Scarcity we may suppose, were dealt out very sparingly, and by somebody or other who would see that the Keeper should not beguile the Swine, whose Lives were of more Consequence to the Owner, than the Life of the poor Wretch that was set to watch them.

The Parable is thus far a very just, but melancholly Picture of human Life; in which young Men, if they will mind it, may read a very useful Lesson of Instruction. The greatest of human Miseries have commonly their Foundation in our

younger Years, when our natural Corruptions first begin to work, and we will not suffer them to be controuled by the wise and wholesome Counfels of our Parents or Friends; from whose Inspection and Government, when Children once break loose and become their own Masters, they generally fall into bad Company, and ruinous Vices, which bring them at last to Poverty and Shame. This young Man seems to have been one of those who thought of nothing but pleasing himself; and when he had got Money sufficient for his present Demands, to have gone on as if he imagined he could never see the End of it. His Father had made him Master of his whole Fortune at once. And what does he with it? He neither employs it in Trade, nor purchases Lands, nor puts it out to Interest, but lives upon the Stock till he had wasted all; which brought him to the miserable Condition in which we just now left him sitting among the Swine, and ready to die for want of Food. The Text goes on and says, *And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired Servants of my Father have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish with Hunger! I will arise,*
and

and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son: Make me as one of thy hired Servants. You see what it was that first brought him to sober Reflection; pinching Necessity. If his Wants had not driven him hard, or a Shilling had been left yet to have been spent, he would never have entertained a Thought of going back to his Father; which shews the great Wisdom and Goodness of Providence, in leaving such bitter Dregs, at the Bottom of vicious Courses. But this is an Issue, that bad Men never think of when they first set out, nor if they did, would it be a safe Thing to trust to. It was fortunate for this young Man that his Father was yet living; for if he had been dead, where would he have gone for Relief in his Distress? How his elder Brother would have received him, the Anger and Resentment which he expressed at his Father's Kindness (which we shall hear of by and by) very plainly shews; and this is a Thing that all young Spendthrifts should take Notice of; that in Proportion as they waste their Substance, they waste their Credit,
they

they lose their Friends, and that when they shall not know where to go for a Morfel of Bread, they will find very few who will think themselves concerned to supply their Neceffities.-----Besides; what did this young Man propose by returning to his Father? He had had, and spent his Portion already; and did he expect to divide again with his Brother? No; the utmost he could hope for, the utmost of his Request was, that his Father would make him *as one of his hired Servants*. In his present State he wanted Bread; and Bread was all he meant to ask; for in Reason he could expect no more. Is this a State that any Man would like? From a Son to stand in the Condition of a Servant, or to be a Hanger-on for Bread? Even in a Father's House this is a very bad Situation; where if a Man eats Bread to the full, he must eat it under the Sights, and Frowns, and, perhaps, Reproaches of the Rest of the Family, who will look upon every Morfel as a Kind of Robbery committed upon themselves. And how much worse will the Case be when Parents die (as die they must) and the Man is left to the Courtesy of his Brethren? who
are

are not always kind in Proportion to the nearness of their Blood, and who, if indeed they are kind in a reasonable Degree, seldom answer what is expected in such Cases. A Man in Distress is very apt to take the Estimate of another's Obligations to him, from what he feels within himself, which is always a great deal more than the other can feel for him; whence it happens frequently, that whilst the Giver thinks himself liberal and generous, the Receiver looks upon him as niggardly and penurious. False Estimates of Kindnesses always produce unequal Returns; and where Bounty is slighted or undervalued, it grows still the more cold. So that Dependencies of this Sort seldom continue long without great Abatements of Friendship on both Sides; a Circumstance which spoils the Satisfaction of the most prosperous Condition, and greatly aggravates the Misery of Poverty and Want; especially among near Relations, where Unkindnesses grate harder in Proportion as they are more unnatural.

From the Distresses of the prodigal Son, let us now go on to the remaining Part of the Parable, which sets before us a lively
Image

Image of a kind and indulgent Father. What the Son purposed, That he very quickly performed. His Necessities would admit of no Delay. *He arose and came to his Father ; but when he was yet a great Way off his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck and kissed him ; and the Son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy Sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. But the Father said to his Servants, bring forth the best Robe and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet ; and bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my Son was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.* A severe Father, when he saw such a Son coming to him, would have shut his Doors against him, or assigned him Food and Raiment some where out of his Sight, nor admitted him to his Presence without great Importunity and Interposition of Friends. It is thus that offended Parents are often wont to act in such Cases ; nor are they, in the general Estimation of the World, censured for this, but rather commended, as giving a proper Dis-

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couragement to bad Courses. But this good Man's paternal Affection presently got the better of his Resentment. The Offence was forgot, and sunk as it were, in the Joy he felt in seeing his Son, whom probably he had long given over for lost; and without so much as hearing what he had to say, or knowing what Apology he would make, he ran out to meet him, and *fell on his Neck and kissed him.* No Doubt the humble and penitent Address in which the Son accosted him upon their first Meeting, greatly heightened his Compassion towards him, and was the Foundation of that Respect with which he received him into his House; which was such, as had he been the most dutiful Son in the World, and had lost all he had by pure Misfortune, and not spent it extravagantly, it could not have been greater; as appears from the Resentment which the elder Son conceived after he had enquired and had been informed what was the Cause of all this rejoicing. *He was angry and would not go in; therefore came his Father out and intreated him. And he answering said to his Father, Lo these many Years do I*
serve

serve thee, neither transgressed I at any Time thy Commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a Kid that I might make merry with my Friends. But as soon as this thy Son was come, which hath devoured thy Living with Harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf. By the Quickness of the elder Son's Reply, it is to be supposed, that though his younger Brother had removed himself into a far^r Country, yet he had, by some Way or other, been informed of his profligate Life; of which the Father himself could not therefore have been ignorant, especially after he had from his own Mouth received so ample a Confession of his Folly and Disobedience. But this notwithstanding the Father undertakes to justify the Manner of his treating him. *For he said unto him, Son thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.* You see here very plainly to what it was that the younger Son was received. It was only to a charitable Allowance to keep him from Want; for all that the Father had, he declared to be the elder Son's. The Feasting, and the Mirth

Mirth on this Occasion, was only a Testimony of his Joy upon the Return of his Son, which no Doubt he would have expressed in some proportionable Manner upon the Reception of a common Friend. The Ring and the Robe were Accoutrements suitable to the Father's Rank and Quality, in which it was but decent for the Son to appear so long as he thought fit to retain him in his Family. What became of the young Man afterwards the Parable does not say; but if it had been represented that he was left to the Mercy of his elder Brother, there would be Reason enough to believe that his Condition was not very comfortable.

From the Parable thus explained there will arise these useful Lessons of Instruction.

In the first Place; it is a Warning against Unthriftiness and Prodigality. It should teach young Men, when they are sent out into the World, and are put into a proper Way of providing for themselves, not to be too lavish of their Money, but to be sober, frugal and industrious in some honest Occupation, and avoid bad Company, and all riotous Excess, as the sure Road to Destruction.---But the Thing principally intended

intended by this Parable is, to shew to us the great Goodness and Condescension of God in his Readiness to accept of repenting Sinners. The Scope of the whole Chapter shews this; and therefore it is that the Father's Indulgence to his prodigal Son is painted out to us in such glowing Colours. There are few such Fathers among Men, and it is not fit perhaps that there should be many. But the strongest Image of paternal Affection that the Imagination can draw, is but a weak Representation of the infinite Mercies of our heavenly Father. The Parable was not intended to shew us what every Father ought to do, in Case his Son turns Rake or Spendthrift; but it was to shew us what God will do, when Sinners repent and come to him for Mercy. The prodigal Son is a fit Emblem of all wicked Men, who, by the Indulgence of their fleshly Appetites, ruin their best Interest, as he did his Estate. And as Poverty is the sure Consequence of extravagant Courses; Vice and Wickedness will as certainly be followed with eternal Condemnation. But as the Father had Compassion upon the returning Son, and kindly received him into his House; so all Sinners,

Sinners, if they repent and return to God, shall be accepted to his Mercy, and be received into his heavenly Kingdom. This comfortable Doctrine is the Corner Stone of the Gospel. If we are saved at all we must be saved by Repentance. We cannot be saved upon the Foot of perfect Obedience; for we are all of us Sinners. And can this Doctrine stand in a more amiable Light than that in which the Parable places it? The Son had done his worst. He had spent all he had, and reduced himself to absolute Beggary. Yet the Father accepts him. This shews that God will accept the very worst of Sinners if they repent. *Though our Sins be as Scarlet they shall be as white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson they shall be as Wool.* Isaiah i. 18. So says the evangelical Prophet; and so says Christ himself. *All Manner of Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of Men, and Blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme.* Matt. xii. 31. Mark iii. 28. And if the Sin against the Holy Ghost is excepted, it is because it will not stand with Repentance, but carries with it the Notion of a stubborn and impenitent Heart. If you ask What that Re-

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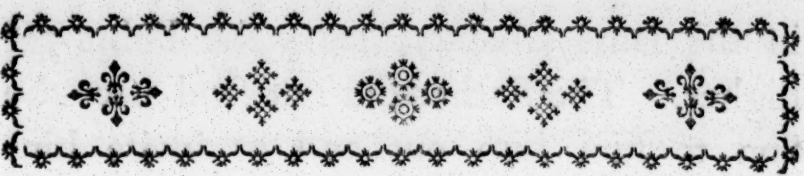
penitance is, which is of so great Efficacy with God; the Parable also plainly shews it. It is the Change of the Heart or Mind from Evil to Good. The prodigal Son had spent all his Money. There was no such Thing as fetching it back again. But the Man's Mind was changed. He returns to his Father under strong Convictions of his Folly and Wickedness; whence it is to be presumed, that if what was past could have been recalled, and he had had the same Means again in his Hands, he would have taken better Courses. This was all he could do; and being all he could do, the Father accepts it. And so it is in all Cases. When bad Actions are committed, they cannot be undone again, nor, in many Cases, can a Recompence be made. But when the Man is changed the Sin will be forgiven; and the Man is changed when the Mind is changed. When the Mind is changed the outward Behaviour will be corresponding to it; and therefore we rightly say, that where there is no Reformation in Life and Manners, there is no Repentance. Why? Because it is evident that the Mind is still the same. This supposes that there are Means and Opportunities

nities still before us, of doing Well or of doing Ill. But the Heart may be changed where there are no such Opportunities; and if it is so, it is that Repentance which shall avail us in the Sight of God.

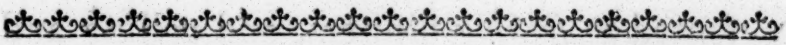
There is one gracious Circumstance relating to the Measure of our Acceptance, in Virtue of our Repentance, which the Parable does not enter into, and which perhaps no Representation taken from human Things can fully reach. The Prodigal (as has been said) was accepted only to a charitable Subsistence, not to another Division of the Father's Substance to make good the Loss of the former. The Reason is obvious. A Man's Estate is a limited Thing; and when a Child has had his Portion and spent it, he cannot receive a Second without Prejudice to the Rest of the Children. But God's Mercies in Heaven are without Measure. There is enough there to satisfy all our Wants, and all our Wishes. No Man can suffer by what another is favoured with. There will be no elder Brothers there to envy our Happiness; and therefore God will accept a penitent Sinner, to every Degree of Happiness to which his future Behaviour will

entitle him. A Man may sin so long as to unqualify himself for any considerable Improvements in Virtue. But every Man shall be rewarded suitably to his Improvements, without any Retrospect to his former Conduct, as I have before said, and as the Parable of the Pounds very plainly shews.

One Thing more give me leave to observe. The Father is not here represented as sending to enquire after his Son, and inviting him to return, but only as receiving him kindly when, driven by his Necessities, he came to him to ask Forgiveness. In which Respect also the Parable comes short of the true Measure of God's Mercies as offer'd to us by the Gospel. *The Son of Man* (says our Saviour) *is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Luke xix. 10. Which is illustrated by two Parables in this Chapter, of which I shall treat in my next Discourse.



S E R M O N X V I I .



LUKE XV. 4, 5, 6, 7.

*What Man of you having an hundred Sheep,
if he lose one of them, doth not leave the
ninety and nine in the Wilderneck, and go
after that which is lost, until he find it.*

*And when he hath found it, he layeth it on
his shoulders, rejoicing.*

*And when he cometh home, he calleth together
his Friends and Neighbours, saying unto
them, Rejoice with me for I have found my
Sheep which was lost.*

*I say unto you, that likewise Joy shall be
in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth,
more than over ninety and nine just Persons
which need no Repentance.*

 H A T God is ready at all Times
to accept of repenting Sinners has
been illustrated in the Parable of
the prodigal Son. The two Parables to
which the Text refers, and which stand

in the same Chapter, carry the Point yet higher. The Father did not send after the Son to find him out and to invite him home to his House; but received him kindly when he was driven home by the Necessities of his Condition. But here God is presented as *seeking* Sinners, and calling and inviting them to Repentance. This fully comes up to the Character of the Gospel and the Office of Christ, who tells us, He came *to seek and to save that which was lost*. Chap. xix. 10. And it is yet a fuller Answer to the Murmurings of the Scribes and Pharisees; for he gives them here to understand, that he proceeded upon the same Maxims, which every wise Man among them would think it right to follow, even in Cases of far less Consequence than that of saving Souls from Destruction. If a lost Sheep is worth saving; surely! a lost Soul is worth saving: Nor was this Concern unworthy of him, the very End of whose Mission was to save Sinners. And as it is natural to Men to rejoice upon every fortunate, successful Event, so (says our Saviour) it will be with God in the present Case: *Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*, and that (as he presently adds)

adds) *more than over ninety and nine just Persons which need no Repentance.*

It is not necessary to say that there are any so righteous as not to stand in need of Repentance ; nor doth our Saviour's Argument lead to any such Supposition. For the Design of the Parable was only to shew the Worth and Value of Repentance where it was necessary. The Pharisees, with whom our Saviour was now discoursing, were those *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.* This was not the Point that our Saviour meant to dispute with them at present, but only to justify his conversing with Sinners ; and this he might do even allowing their Pretensions. For what if they were so righteous as to need no Repentance ? Did it therefore follow that it was wrong and improper to converse with Sinners in Order to bring them to Repentance ? Our Saviour therefore might well pass over this as a Thing foreign to his Intention, and leaving them in Possession of their high Opinion of themselves, proceed to justify his Conduct (as he does) by saying, *Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than*

over ninety and nine just Persons that need no Repentance.

It is in a Sense not unlike to this that we are to understand another Passage in Scripture; viz. Matt. ix. 13, where our Saviour says, *I am not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* By which Words our Saviour did not intend to teach us there were any in every Respect so perfect as not to want to be called to Repentance. The End of Christ's coming was to call *all Men every where to repent*, that is, all who wanted to be called, which St. Paul tells us were absolutely all; for *all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God--- And---there is none that doeth Righteousness, no not one.* The full Import of this Passage therefore is no more than this, that if Men were not Sinners there would be no need to call them to Repentance; for (as our Saviour observes Ver. 12.) *They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick.* The Prejudice that he had to remove was the same in this Case as in the other. For thus the Pharisees reasoned to Christ's Disciples, *Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners?* To this it was a proper Answer to say it was his Business to convert Sinners;

Sinners; and the Answer will be equally proper whether there are any so righteous as to need no Repentance, or whether there are none.

But it may here be asked (and it seems to carry with it a much greater Difficulty) Why does our Saviour say, that there shall be Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, *more than over ninety and nine just Persons which need no Repentance?* Whence this Preference (as it may seem) of Repentance to Righteousness which needs no Repentance? Repentance no doubt is necessary when Men have sinned; so is Physick when they are sick. But is not being in Health a much better Thing than being cured of a Distemper?---No doubt it is; nor doth our Saviour's Answer import any Thing to the contrary. He says indeed that Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine (that is, many) just Persons which need no Repentance; but his Intention in this was not to teach that Repentance is a better Thing than Righteousness which needs no Repentance, as you will very plainly perceive by considering the Parable in all its Circumstances.

A Man is supposed to have an hundred Sheep, of which one is lost and again found. Upon this he is represented as conceiving greater Joy, than over the ninety and nine which went not astray; *for he calleth his Friends and his Neighbours saying, rejoice with me, for I have found my Sheep which was lost.* The Parable does not say, that this one Sheep was of more Value than any of the Rest; and it will be absurd to say, that it could be of more Value than the ninety and nine. Nor will the Circumstance of its having been lost and again found make any Difference in the Case. The comparative Value, therefore, between the Thing lost, and the Thing not lost, having no Place in the Parable, can have none in the Application.

Take the next Instance if you please; and you will come to the same Conclusion. A Woman is supposed to have ten Pieces of Silver, and to lose one of them. The Greek Word, which we translate *a Piece of Silver*, denotes a Piece of some determinate Value; suppose it to be the Value of a Sixpence, or a Shilling, more or less, for it imports not. It is a very plain Case that one Sixpence is not of greater

greater Value than another Sixpence ; nor one Shilling of greater Worth than another Shilling. And yet the Woman is represented as conceiving greater Joy for the one Piece that was found, than for the nine which were not lost; for she *calletb together her Friends and her Neighbours saying, rejoice with me for I have found the Piece which I had lost*. Here again, therefore, the comparative Value hath nothing to do in the Case.

Once more ; go back to the Parable of the prodigal Son. A Father divides his Inheritance between his two Sons ; the younger of which takes his Portion and goes his Way, and wastes it in riotous Living. After a Time, Distress calling him to sober Thought and Reflexion, he comes back to his Father full of Sorrow and says, *Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*. The Joy expressed on this Occasion is the same as in the other Instances. But do you think it reasonable to say that the Father valued his Son the more because he had spent his Substance in riotous Living ? Some such Thoughts seem to have arisen in the Breast of the elder Son,

Son, who drew his Father's Kindness to his Brother into a Matter of Complaint. *Lo! these many Years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any Time thy Commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a Kid that I might make merry with my Friends. But as soon as this thy Son was come, which hath devoured thy Living with Harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf.* The Father's Answer deserves well your Attention: *Son thou art ever with me and all I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy Brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.* Observe the Particulars of this Answer. 1. The Preference is given to the elder Son, who had never at any Time transgressed his Father's Commandment: *All that I have is thine.* And what (in Comparison to this *all*) were the killing the fatted Calf, a Ring and a Pair of Shoes? 2. The Reason expressly assigned for the Distinction made between the elder and the younger Son, that whilst the Father never gave a Kid to the one to make merry with his Friends, he had (on this Occasion) killed for the other the fatted Calf, is this; that the elder Son was
ever

ever with him, and stood entitled to much greater Things. The younger Son was once of the Father's Family as well as he. But he was in Haste to be gone, and cried out with Impatience, *Father give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me.* The Father yields to his Importunity and the Son is presently undone. But undone as he was, and by his own Folly undone, still he was his Son, and being penitent, he receives him.-----But how? Not (as I have said) to divide again his Substance with his elder Brother, but to a charitable Relief. There was more Joy, but there was less of real Value. There is in every one of these Instances a plain Allusion to the Workings of human Passions; which are not determined by the intrinsic Worth of Things, but many Times by incidental Circumstances. A Man is sometimes more pleased to meet an old Friend, than to see his nearest and his dearest Relation; because, though he values the one more, yet the other is less familiar. So if a Man had twenty Shillings, and should lose one of them; the Surprize and Unexpectedness, when he finds it again, would more sensibly

sibly affect him than if he had kept them all safe in his Pocket. We see this, or something like this, in Multitudes of Instances that occur every Day in human Life. But as Passion, or the Effects of Passion, are not incident to the supream Being; what is literally true in the Comparison, cannot therefore be literally true in the Application. In God there is properly neither Joy nor Sorrow, nor can any Thing be new or unexpected to him with whom is *no Variableness nor Shadow of Turning*. And therefore all that is intended by this Sort of Comparisons is to suggest to us this plain and simple Truth, that God is at all Times ready to accept of repenting Sinners; which comes to us, however, with greater Force, by being represented to us under these lively Images of human and natural Things. Let us now make some general Observations upon the foregoing Parables.

1. The first is, that God's Readiness to accept of repenting Sinners, is in itself not only the best Encouragement that can be offered to Sinners to bring them to Repentance, but also a Consideration that will leave them without excuse, if they go on
to

to do wickedly and die in their Sins. When Mercy is so freely and so graciously offered, Condemnation will be just; unless you will say that God might save us without Repentance. But how can this be? God must act like himself, that is, in such a Manner as will become the wise and righteous Judge of the World. But to suppose that God may save the Impenitent, destroys the very Notion of his being our Judge; for to treat the Good and the Bad alike, and to make it to be one and the same Thing, whether they repent or whether they repent not, is not to judge, but to disclaim all Use of Judgment. But from the Nature of Things it is clear, that God is, and must be our Judge: For as reasonable Creatures we are Subject to his Law; and a Right of Legislation includes in it a Right of Judgment. To say that God cannot judge Sinners, is to say that he has no Right to enquire into our Behaviour, and this is in Effect, to say that we are lawless Creatures: For if we are under a Law, we are answerable for the Breaches of that Law; and how should this be, unless God has a Right to take Notice of our Behaviour,

viour, and to reward or punish us as we shall be found to deserve? There is therefore no Sense in supposing that God should save unrepenting Sinners, upon the common Foot of a governing Providence; which, as Christians, we must all of us be presumed to believe: So that it must be said, that in offering Salvation upon the Terms of Repentance, God offers it upon the lowest Terms he could offer it, consistently with the Perfections of his Nature; for all he requires from us is to repent. And surely! it must be a very sad State of Mind, when a Man cannot be wrought upon by the utmost that a wise and a good God can do for him; nor will accept of Salvation but upon such Terms as are inconsistent with the very Notion of that perfect Being in whose Power alone it is to save or to destroy.

2. As God's Readiness to accept of repenting Sinners, binds us to Repentance, so it ought to be a Reason with us never at any Time to offend. For this Readiness shews the greatest Goodness and Condescension; and where Goodness more abounds, *Sin becomes the more exceeding sinful*. It were a vain and a wicked

wicked Thought should any one suggest, that because *our Unrighteousness* (as St. Paul speaks) *commends the Righteousness of God*, and illustrates the Riches of his Grace in shewing Mercy, therefore we shall be justified in doing wickedly. The Goodness of a sovereign Prince, is manifested in the Forgiveness of a rebellious Subject; and that of a Father in the Forgiveness of a disobedient Child; yet in neither of these Cases are we wont to plead in Mitigation of an Offence, from the Lenity and Tenderneſs of the Authority against which the Offence is committed. If Sinners were therefore excusable before God, because they give him an Opportunity of shewing Mercy; then Sin would not be Sin, and consequently Mercy would not be Mercy; and upon this foot we may well ask with the same Apostle, *how shall God judge the World?* Sin therefore retaineth its Nature though God is merciful to Sinners; which Mercy (as I before said) aggravates our Guilt; it cannot make it less. For the more the Goodness, the greater the Sin: And be God's Goodness in other Respects as

great as it will, (as doubtless it is in all Respects unspeakably great) it will always be a great Instance of Goodness added to the rest, that if we repent he is ready to forgive us. From hence it follows

3. That no Man can propose any real Advantage to himself, by making Use of God's Goodness as a Handle to do wickedly. If a Sinner dies without Repentance, his Case is desperate; and as his Sins have been greater, because persisted in, in Defiance of God's Offers and calls to Repentance, his Doom will be the more heavy and severe. But let us suppose the best, and say that he has repented, I will now ask this plain Question: What has Sin profited him? Once he had the Pleasures of Sin; but what is this to him now? These are fled away and gone, and have left nothing behind them but their Sting, which will afflict a Conscience, made tender by Repentance, with a more sensible Pain than those Pleasures (if he could now taste them with all their Sweetness) would be able to recompence. The Prodigal no doubt thought himself very happy when he was among his Harlots, and rioting with his merry Companions. (But how

was

was it with him when he was sitting among the Swine, pinched with Want, and racked with the Thoughts of having offended an indulgent Father? Thus it is in all Cases. Whatever be the Pleasures of Sin, in the Enjoyment, we shall pay more for them a great deal than they are worth, when we come to repent in good earnest. If there is any such Thing as a Recompence it lies here, that we may possibly hate our Vices the more, by our having experienced how wretched they will make us: We have an Instance of this in the Parable of the Prodigal; and sometimes we see it in common Life, that when Men are pushed on by strong and violent Passions, and meet with Repulses, they are thrown back towards the contrary Extream, and grow remarkable for a rigid, austere Virtue. But would you therefore advise your Son to turn Gamester, in hopes that when he has thrown away a good Estate, and is put upon his Shifts, he may at some Time or other scrape together a better by his Pennyury? There is no Man among you who would not think the Experiment too hazardous. It is even so in the present Case. Men hazard a great deal too much when

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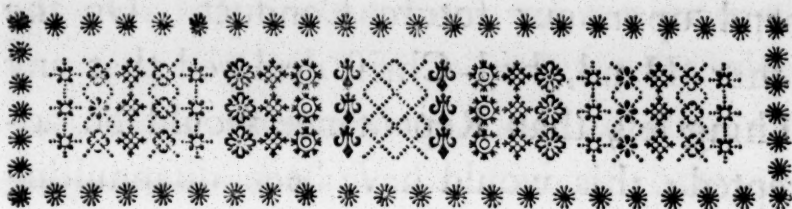
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they set out in bad Courses, if ever they mean to reform. It is possible that they may make that only good Use that can be made of their Vices, to hate them the more because they have experienced them ; but it is not very likely that they will do so. To one that even recovers the Ground he has lost, there are thousands who the nearer they come to the Grave the worse they grow, and never so much as think of repenting till it is too late to attempt it. So that in no View in which you can consider this Case will the Goodness of God to Sinners afford any reasonable Encouragement to Men to sin. Wherefore

4. It ought to be observed in Commendation of the Gospel, that it is excellently well adapted to answer the Purpose which Providence intended from it ; the reforming a corrupted and degenerate World. Had Christ come to tell us that there was no Room for Pardon, this had been in Effect to have pronounced our Condemnation ; and Sentence once passed, the very ground Work of Repentance would have been taken away ; for the Hopes from Repentance arise from the Spposition that the final Issue of Things is still left to depend

pend upon our future Conduct. On the other Hand, had Christ declared that any Thing less than Repentance would be accepted; this would have been disannulling the Law of Righteousness, which certainly was not the Way to make Mankind better, but to make them a great deal worse. One only Way was left, which was to offer Reconciliation upon the Terms of Repentance; which, at the same Time that it keeps bad Men from despair, leaves good ones also under the Influence of all those Reasons which are proper to secure their Virtues.



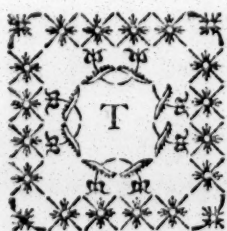


S E R M O N XVIII.



MATTHEW XXV. 13.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.



THESE Words stand connected with two Parables of our Saviour, recorded in this Chapter. They are an Inference from the first; they are the Introduction to the second; and they may be considered as the Moral to both, since both are intended to recommend to us Care and Diligence in our heavenly Calling, in View of the great Account we are to render at the Day of Judgment; of the Certainty of which, upon the Conclusion of the Whole, we are most solemnly admonished. *When the*

the Son of Man shall come in his Glory---- before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats. And he shall set his Sheep on his right Hand, but the Goats on the Left----To the one he will say----Come ye blessed of my Father ; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World. To the other----Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Thus much is certain and to be depended upon, that there shall be a Time for Judgment; when the Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal. But when this Time shall be accomplished is a Secret reserved in the Bosom of Providence, as we are told Chap. xxiv. Vers. 35. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Words shall not pass away. But of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only. But as in the Days of Noe----they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in Marriage----and knew not until the Flood came and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

This then being the Case; that Judgment is certain, but the Time uncertain; the natural Inference is, that we take Care always to be in a State of Preparation for it. And this for two very weighty Reasons.

1. Because if we are not now prepared, we cannot be certain that we shall have Time wherein to prepare ourselves afterwards. 2. Because supposing we should have Time, we are not sure that the Means will be continued to us. Christ will not come to judge the World till the End of the World; but every Man's Death puts a Period to his Work, and therefore to his Preparation for a future Judgment. If we are not prepared before we die, we can never be prepared, for *there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge---in the Grave whether we are going.* Eccles. ix. 10. And therefore in Proportion as Life is uncertain, the Time for Preparation must be uncertain if we neglect the present Opportunity. But supposing (I say) that God should grant us Time hereafter, yet if he takes away from us the Means, the Issue will be the same. We shall come to Judgment unprepared, and God will be justified in our Condemnation,

nation, because we once had the Means but would not make use of them.

These are the two Points intended to be illustrated by the two Parables; which I mean to explain, and to draw such Observations from the several Parts of the Comparifon, as may be useful to enforce the general Doctrine contained in them. The first Point is illustrated by the first Parable, and this will furnish me with Matter for the present Discourse. The Parable is this.

The Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto ten Virgins which took their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their Lamps and took no Oil with them: But the Wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at Midnight there was a Cry made; Behold! The Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps. And the Foolish said unto the Wise, give us of your Oil for our Lamps are gone out. But the Wise answered saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us
and

and for you: But go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut. Afterward came also the other Virgins, saying Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

The Plan of this Parable is taken from a Custom which the Jews observed in their wedding Feasts, which were celebrated in the Night; when the Bridemaids used to attend the Bride and Bridegroom with burning Lamps to the Bridegroom's House where the Wedding was kept. The Bridegroom went to fetch his Bride from her own House, and was received by the Bridemaids her Attendants at some Distance; after which they went all together to the House of the Bridegroom in solemn Procession. To the Joys of such Feasts as these (which are usually the most exalted in their Kind) is the blessedness of a future State here compared. The Bridegroom is Christ, and the

the Virgins are all who take the Name and Profession of Christians upon themselves, and hope to be by him received into his heavenly Kingdom. For they all took their Lamps; all made Shew and Profession of their Intention to go forth and meet the Bridegroom; which Character does not suit with mere Jews or Heathens, but with the Disciples of Christ only. Now let us consider the several Parts of this Parable, and see what Instructions will arise from it.

1. *Five of these Virgins were wise and five of them were foolish*; which is intended to teach us, that all who should profess to be the Disciples of Christ, would not answer the End of their Profession. The End for which these Virgins took their Lamps was to do Honour to the Bridegroom, and to go with him to the Wedding-Feast. So the End which every one proposes in becoming Christ's Disciple, is to do Honour to Christ and to enter into his Glory. But many of the first fell short of the End proposed, and so do many of the last; which is a great Instance of Folly, as it shews Inconsistency and Unfaithfulness to ourselves. Either there are Reasons for our being Christians

or

or there are none. If the latter, why do we profess to be Christians? If the former, let us take Care to be Christians in Deed, not in Name and Profession only, For,

2. *The foolish Virgins took their Lamps and took no Oil with them, but the wise took Oil in their Vessels.* This shews that a mere Profession will not do. Lamps without Oil are of no Use. Faith is as vain a Thing without those Virtues and Graces which make it operative. This is the constant Gospel Doctrine, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*; and therefore to trust to a mere Profession, whilst we are wanting in those Endowments that should bespeak us to be what we pretend to be, is but deceiving ourselves. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord,* (says our Saviour) *and do not the Things which I say?* Luke vi. 46. And at the 21st Verse of this Chapter: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And who doeth the Will of God? Not he who performs an outside Obedience, but he who doeth it *from the Heart*, as the Apostle speaks, Eph. vi. 6. and Rom. vi. 17. This it is to have Oil
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in our Lamps. Works externally good are the Light; for these only can be seen of Men; but that which feeds and gives them Virtue to save us, is the Obedience of the Heart; when in every Action we do we have an Eye to God as our Lawgiver and Judge: When we shew a right Behaviour not because Man will honour us, but, because God will love us; not in Prospect of any Advantage of this World, but in View of the Recompence that is to come.

When the Heart is thus disposed, the Fruits of it will appear in every Branch of our Conduct, not in this or that particular Instance only. It will influence us in all Cases, and at all Times; and secure us from doing bad Things, as well when Duty calls us to contradict Flesh and Blood, as when no Temptation befalls us. There is such a Thing as a partial imperfect Virtue. The foolish Virgins in the Parable were not absolutely without Oil. They had enough to *trim their Lamps*, and to put them into a Posture to go forth; but it was spent before the Bridegroom came. This is the Case of too many Christians; who have just Virtue enough to qualify them to set out right, but not Stock to support

support them in the Progress of a good Life. This is doing nothing, as the Story before us shews. They that attended the Bridegroom to his House, they only were admitted to the Wedding-Feast; and they that *endure unto the End*, they only *shall be saved*. Matt. x. 22.

But we must take heed that we carry not our Notions of Perfection too high. For,

3. It is recorded of *all* these Virgins, that *while the Bridegroom tarried they slumbered and slept*. That is (as I understand it) they all of them did the one or the other. Some slumbered and others slept. We cannot be at a Loss to know who these Sleepers were. They were the foolish Virgins. They slept even when the Bridegroom was expected. They were idle and careless before; for they had not provided themselves with Oil. The wise ones had brought their Oil indeed, but yet they slumbered. This was intended to shew us, that there is no Virtue merely human, without some Mixture of Imperfection. The very best of us *slumber*, as it were, to the next World. The Attention we bestow about it more nearly resembles the rambling, unconnected Thoughts of Men
half

half asleep, than the close intense Conceptions of those who are thoroughly awakened to the Business they have in Hand. Thus it must be whilst we are cloathed with Flesh and Blood, and the World presents us with such a Variety of Objects to draw our Thoughts another Way. Could we see the Glories of Heaven as they are, we should always be awake to them; we should desire nothing else; we should think of nothing else. But as God hath made us for this World, as well as for the next, so he hath given us Affections suited to this World. We know just enough of the next World to make it a reasonable Inducement to pursue it as our supream Good. But the Stream of our Passions move the other Way; and it is necessary it should be so, to keep us attentive to the Means of our Preservation for the Time that it shall please God to continue us here, which will take up a great Share of our Time and of our Thoughts. And as these Things are near at Hand, and we have the present, full Experience what they are; whilst the Happiness of a future State lies seemingly a great Way off, and is seen but darkly; no
marvel

marvel if we are carried sometimes a little beyond the Line; that we shew some Irregularities in our Conduct; and are more occupied in Things that concern this World than is strictly fit. But if we thus slumber, we are still safe provided we do not sleep; provided we have not left our Oil behind us; which will be the Case when we indulge so far as to suffer the smaller Errors in Conduct to grow into Habits of Vice. I am not now considering what may contribute to the Greatness of our Reward in a future State, as to the Degree and Measure of it; but only what is simply necessary to gain us Admittance into God's Kingdom, for with this Point alone the Parable concerns itself. Those Virgins that slumbred might have been been more acceptable to the Bridegroom if they had kept themselves awake for ought that the Parable says to the contrary; but still they were not shut out; which shews that there are Degrees of Imperfection, which may well consist with a State of Salvation. God forbid that it should not be so! For what Man is there upon Earth *that sinneth not? Who can say I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* Eccles.

Ecclef. ix. 20. Prov. xx. 9. Only let us take heed that we do not impose upon ourselves, in reckoning every Sin to be an excusable Failing which we cannot part with without Difficulty. To distinguish exactly in all Cases may be a hard Work, fit only for him who *knoweth whereof we are made*, and sees the Proportion between the Temptations that surround us, and the Strength he has given us to enable us to bear them. But though Allowance will be made for human Frailties, none will be made for wilful, deliberate Offences, habitually persisted in. For these imply that the Heart is estranged from God, and cannot stand with any Degree of Seriousness in what we profess when we call ourselves the Disciples of Christ, and pretend to have Hope in him.

From the foregoing Observations then I suppose we may be sufficiently instructed what it is to be prepared for the coming of Christ. The remaining Parts of the Parable will shew us how much it concerns us to be always in this State of Preparation.

The Jewish Wedding-Feasts (as I have observed) were always kept in the Night. The Evening therefore was the first Date

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of Time when the Bridegroom was to be expected; and by this Time it is to be presumed that these Virgins had taken their Lamps. But he tarried it seems till Midnight; and might have tarried longer for ought they knew, for the precise Time in such Cases was uncertain, as appears from Luke xii. 35. *Let your Loins be girded about and your Lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto Men that wait for the Lord when he will return from the Wedding----*Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching ----and if he shall come in the second Watch, or come in the third Watch and find them so, *blessed are those Servants.* This represents to us the great uncertainty of human Life, which includes the whole Period assigned us wherein to prepare ourselves for the Kingdom of Christ; insomuch that when Death comes we shall have no Choice left: If prepared we shall enter in; if unprepared, we shall be shut out for ever. That we must die we all know; but when none of us can tell. It may be in the Evening, in the Prime of Life; it may be at Midnight, in our middle Age; or it may be in the Morning, when we are
grown

grown old. We should be prepared then for either of these Events, because we know not which will happen; and so the wise Virgins were. But the Conduct of the foolish, is a lively Emblem of the Practice of many professed Christians, who put off the great Work of Preparation till the very last Moment; and never so much as think whether they are qualified or unqualified, till the near Approach of Death admonishes them that Judgment is now even at the Door. If these Virgins had considered what Stock of Oil was necessary when they first took their Lamps, and found it to be insufficient, they might probably have furnished themselves before the Bridegroom came; for he tarried long. But regardless of this they gave themselves up to Sleep, as many Christians do to carnal Security. And what was the Consequence? The Bridegroom came and found them unprepared. Observe now their Diligence when it could nothing profit them. They *trimmed their Lamps* as well as the rest, with such a Stock of Oil as they had, but finding that it would not suffice, they apply to their wise Companions, and say, *give us of your Oil for our Lamps are gone*

out. But they answered saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. This suits the Case of many careless Christians, who though they scarce in their whole Lives ever entertained one serious Thought, yet when Death comes and looks them on the Face, start up as Men affrighted out of their Sleep, and cry out *what shall we do to be saved.* In this Distress they lay hold of the Helps nearest at Hand, and if they have not confidence enough in their own Virtues, they will try if they can serve themselves by the good Offices of others. But such Hopes, you see, are vain. The foolish Virgins would fain have borrowed Oil, but the wise ones had none to lend them; and what can one Christian do for another in such Cases? Why nothing but bid him provide Oil for himself. We cannot transfer our Virtues, as we may our Money, or our Goods, so as to make them anothers Property, nor, if we could, are there any of us who have more than what will suffice for ourselves. Superstition may lend her Aid to furnish us with false Supports. Such are that Variety of Trumpery held forth by the Church

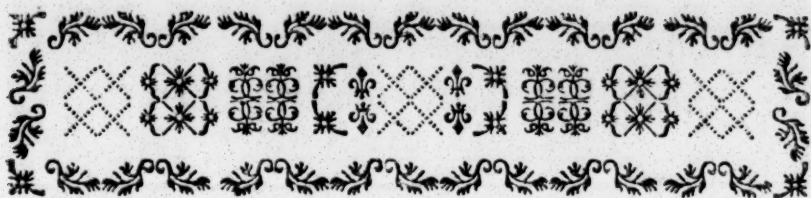
Church of Rome, to which poor dying Sinners are taught to trust: And such we shall make to ourselves even the Ordinances of Christ, if we stop at the mere outward Work, and use them as if they were Spells and Charms. For the plain honest Truth is this; there is but one Way to Heaven, and that is Repentance and a good Life through Faith in Jesus Christ; and therefore all that the greatest Saint upon Earth can do for his fellow Christian is, by his Example, by his Advice, by his Prayers, to assist him in the Work of Repentance; and all that Sinners can effectually do for themselves is to repent, in which, it is to be apprehended, little will be done when the whole Work is left to be begun and concluded in the short Space of a death-bed Sickness. When the wise Virgins bid the foolish to *go to them that sell and buy Oil for themselves*, they seem to speak with an Air of Reproach, as if they were sending them upon a very hopeless Errand; and so it proved in the Event; for *while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut.* The single Cause here assigned why these Virgins were

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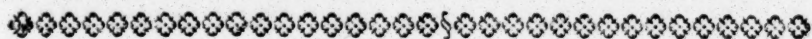
left behind is, that they were not ready ; which implies, that if they had returned with their Oil, and been ready when the Bridegroom came, they would have gone with him as well as the rest. So, the latest Repentance shall be accepted. But it fell out otherwise. They were not returned when the Bridegroom came ; and therefore they were shut out not to be admitted afterwards ; for when they *came saying Lord, Lord open to us ; he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

The great Lesson then that we are to learn from the Parable is, that if we make not the best Use of our Time, and take care to qualify ourselves with those Graces that are necessary to gain us Admittance into Heaven, whensoever it shall please God to call us hence ; we may be called so suddenly that there shall be no Time for Preparation left, and that when this Life is at an End there is nothing to be done to save us.





S E R M O N X I X .



MATTHEW XXV. 29.

*For unto every one that hath shall be given,
and he shall have Abundance ; but from
him that hath not, shall be taken away
even that which he hath.*

THE two Parables set down in
this Chapter, are intended (as
was observed in my last Dis-
course) to recommend to us
Care and Diligence in our heavenly Call-
ing, in View of the Account we are to
give at the Day of Judgment. But they
enforce it by Arguments of a different Na-
ture. The Parable of the ten Virgins (al-
ready explained) sets before us the Uncer-
tainty of the Time of Christ's coming, and
the Hazard we run of wanting Opportunity

to prepare ourselves if we put off the Work of Repentance to any Time beyond the present. This was the Case of the five foolish Virgins. They were unprovided with Oil for their Lamps, when they were told that the Bridegroom was just at hand; and whilst they were gone to buy the Bridegroom came, and they were shut out. Oil might have been had, if they had had Time to get it: They were lost therefore not for Want of the Means, but for Want of Opportunity only.

But the next Parable goes upon another Foot, and shews us, that if God should, after long and wilful Neglects, still vouchsafe us farther Opportunity, we may yet miscarry for Want of the Means, the Continuance of which he may deny us for our Unprofitableness. Hear the Parable itself.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is as a Man travelling into a far Country, who called his own Servants, and delivered unto them his Goods. And unto one he gave five Talents, to another two, and to another one, to every Man according to his several Ability, and straightway took his Journey. Then he that had received the five Talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other
five*

five Talents; and likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the Earth, and hid his Lord's Money. After a long Time the Lord of those Servants cometh and reckoneth with them; and the Issue was that the two first, who had made a proper Improvement of their Money, received honourable Testimony of their Master's Approbation, and were bid to enter into his Joy: But he that had received the one Talent, came and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard Man, reaping where thou hast not sowed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy Talent in the Earth. Lo! there thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, thou wicked and slothful Servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not sowed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with Usury. Take therefore the Talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten Talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have Abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the
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*unprofitable Servant into outer Darknes :
There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

We have the same Representation in another Parable, recorded Luke xix. (and spoken by our Saviour upon another Occasion) where *a certain Nobleman* is said to have *called his ten Servants, and to have delivered them ten Pounds* (that is, one Pound each) to trade with. One of these Servants did nothing with the Money he had received, but *laid it up in a Napkin* ; for which he made the same Excuse, that the other did here, who *hid his Talent in the Earth*, and received the same Answer, and met with the same Treatment. For the Money was taken from him, and given to him that had gained *ten Pounds*. Now though, without all Doubt, the Design of these Parables was to shew, that when Christ comes to Judgment, he will call every Man to account for the Use of his Talents, and reward the Diligent and punish the Slothful and Improvident ; yet this particular Circumstance, in both Stories, the taking away the Money from him that had done nothing with it, and giving it to him that had made the greatest Improvement, hath a Respect to God's dealing

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ing in this World ; for the Money was not given as the Reward of Industry, but as an additional Stock for farther Improvement. For the Reward is distinctly mentioned in both Cases ; in the one it is more general, *Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord* ; in the other it is more precise, *Have thou Authority over ten Cities*. The Money given therefore could not be the Reward nor any Part of it, but, must be considered as an additional Trust put into the Servant's Hand, upon the Experience the Master had had of his Diligence and Fidelity. But when this World is at an End, our Trust is at an End. We are then to receive our Reward, not to work out our Salvation.

There are two Cases plainly suggested in these two Parables. The Parable of the Pounds supposes the Trust equal, and the Improvement unequal. That of the Talents supposes the Trust unequal, and the Improvements proportionable. In the first Case our Saviour is express, that he who improves most shall have the greatest Reward. But in the second nothing is said of the Proportion of the Reward, nor perhaps is it a Matter fit for us to enquire into.

into. But both Cases agree in this; that the Money was taken from him who had made no Use of it; and in both the Servant so treated complains of Hardship. But where does the Hardship lie? The Servant pleads his own Cause: Let us attend a little to his Reasoning.

I knew thee, that thou art a hard Man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed. What was there in the Master's Conduct that deserved to be loaded with so much Reproach? Make it your own Case. You deliver so much Money to your Steward to trade with for your Use. When you come to account with him, you expect a Produce answerable to the Money deposited, and to the Use that may honestly and fairly be made of it. Have you not Reason to expect it? Will you not think yourself wronged to have it said, that you reap where you have not sown, and that you gather where you have not strowed? If the Master had expected a greater Increase than the Money would reasonably yield, this might have been said; and in that Case, it is to be presumed, that the Servant would have refused to have accepted the Trust. His very Acceptance of it therefore sup-
poses

poses that the Master expected no more than reasonable Gains; and what Room was there then to cry out of Hardship? His Fellow-Servants doubled their Money; why might not he have done so too? The Master therefore despising this Charge as palpably unjust, takes the Servant at his Word, and reasons with him upon his own Principles. *Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with Usury.* As much as to say, “ If I am that
 “ unreasonable Man you represent me to
 “ be, and expected more than was fit, was
 “ I therefore to expect nothing? The Advantage that may be made of Money,
 “ by putting it out at common Interest, is
 “ not equal to what may be made of it
 “ by trading; but something it is; and if
 “ you were too lazy to employ it in the
 “ one Way, you ought not to have had so
 “ little Forecast as to have neglected the
 “ other.” To this Answer the Servant makes no Reply, as indeed none was to be made. The Sentence therefore follows. *Take the Talent from him, and give it unto him*

him that hath ten Talents. There is not a Man among you who would not do the self-same Thing in like Cases. If you had one Servant that was slothful and unthrifty, would you, upon full Experience of it, trust him any longer with your Money? Would you not put it into the Hands of those whom you had found to be the best Managers? This is but pursuing the plain Dictates of common Sense.

This dealing of the Master by his unprofitable Servant, our Saviour in the Text sets forth as the Emblem of God's proceeding with those who are unprofitable under the Means of Salvation, vouchsafed them by the Gospel. *Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have Abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.* By having here we are to understand having with some good Effect; and the Meaning is, that if we are industrious in our heavenly Calling, and so employ the Means given as to answer the Purpose of God's Goodness in bestowing them; he will be more kind and merciful to us still, and grant us those farther Aids, which may enable us more and more to grow in Virtue. But when
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the Means produce nothing, he will take them away, and leave us to the Blindness and Corruption of our own Hearts, which will lead us on from bad to worse, till ripe for Justice, he shall consign us over to everlasting Punishment.

It is with great Justice that the Cases are made alike; for the reasoning in the one concludes as well as in the other. It is as much God's Concern that we make a right Use of his Gifts, as it is any Man's Concern that his Servant, whom he entrusts, makes a right Use of his Money. It is as reasonable to take away what is unprofitably lent in this Case as it is in any other. But it is to be observed, that this is an Example of what God in Justice may do, not of what he is obliged to do, and will do always, and in every Instance. A Master may justify taking away his Money from a Servant who makes no Improvement of it; but for Reasons of Prudence he may sometimes think fit to bear with him: And what a Man may do for Reasons of Prudence, that God may do for the Reasons of his Providence, which extends to all Mankind, as well as to this or that Particular.

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Some Means are of a very general Nature ; of which Kind is the Gospel externally offered ; which God may be said to take away, when he takes away the Administration of his Word and Sacraments. But he cannot take away these from bad Men, without taking them away from good ones too ; for which Reason God is pleased to continue them in many Countries where the Professors of Religion are very corrupt. But a Nation may grow to be so generally bad, and stand out against the Means offered with so much Obstinacy, that God may be provoked at last to take them away ; which was the Case of the Jews when the Gospel was first published, and has been the Case of many Christian Countries since ; and which, I pray God, it may not, in some short Time, be the Case of our own. Whenever we see Wickedness greatly prevail, and the Gospel growing into a general Contempt, we shall always have great Reason to be apprehensive that this Judgment may come upon us ; the greatest of all surely ! though the least accounted of by bad Men. Nor let us think ourselves ever the more secure, because Christ hath promised that
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his Church on Earth shall never fail. The Jews, we read, thought themselves as safe in the Privileges of the Covenant made with their Forefathers. But what saith the Scripture? *Bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham.* Matt. iii. 8, 9. God could raise himself up a Church, though the Gospel should be taken away from every Nation under Heaven where it is now professed; and should he do this, so great and so general a Corruption hath spread itself over the Face of Christendom, that it would appear to be but according to the declared Methods of his Providence in such Cases. It would be but making us the Example of what was foretold and executed upon the Jews: *I say unto you the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.* Chap. xxi. 43.

But Changes of this Sort do not happen every Day; nor must we pretend to know *the Times and the Seasons* when such Acts of Providence are proper, *which the Father hath left in his own Power.* It will be of more

Use to us to attend to what concerns every Christian among us; and which is more common and familiar. By the Goodness of God we all live under the public Ministration of his Word; and every Man has a Talent of his own, in the Use of which he is accountable to God, and which if he neglects, the external Ministration of the Word will become unprofitable. There are Gifts of Nature and Gifts of Grace, necessary to dispose us to profit by the outward Means, and which we every Day run the Hazard of forfeiting by our Negligence.

As to the first of these, God hath so ordered our natural Frame that the Sentence of our Saviour in a great Measure executes itself. It cannot be said that we are born virtuous; but there is in many that Happiness of Temper, that they are easily made so, when Age and the exercise of the Understanding shall enable them *to discern both Good and Evil*. In others, the Passions are more predominant, and they are therefore with more Difficulty brought to submit themselves to the Discipline of Religion. But this is common to us all; that the more we neglect ourselves, or are neg-

neglected by those who should form us into good Manners, the less apt we grow to receive Instruction; and there is nothing more certain in Fact and Experience than that vicious Courses, willfully indulged, and habitually persisted in, harden the Mind and make it impenetrable to the Counsels of Wisdom. It is thus that St. Paul represents the State of the Heathen World, Eph. iv. 18, 19. *Having the Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness (or Hardness) of their Hearts. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness.* And do we not see many who profess themselves Christians, and have been soberly brought up, who by falling into bad Company, and bad Practices, have by degrees worn out the natural Impressions of Decency, and act as if there were no distinction between Right and Wrong? When this is the Case it must be said that the Means of Virtue are wanting. The Gospel, it is true, calls from without; and they have the Examples of wise and good Men, to shew them *the good and the*

right Way. But what avails *the Voice of the Charmer* to the *deaf Adder*? Or to what purpose is it, that the Light shines upon those who have lost the Use of their Eyes? Should God grant to such as these, all possible Opportunities for Repentance, they would be never the nearer to it. He may give them Time even to hoary Hairs and feeble Knees, they will never find a Heart for it. The longer they live the worse they will grow. And does not this verify what our Saviour hath said, *He that bath not, that is improveth not, from him shall be taken even that which he bath?* Men seldom stand still, in respect of their moral State. If they make not a good Use of the Gifts of God, they will make a bad one of course. And though all Men are not born with the same Passions, yet every Man hath naturally that Aptitude for Virtue, which will enable him to become a good Man, if he will use Diligence and make the best of it. But if he is careless and loses it (as it is certain he may) then what he *bath* is *taken away*. He takes it from himself, it is true; but God takes it from him too. He is the Instrument against himself; but God is the Author

thor, as this Effect is the natural Result and Consequence of the Order in natural Things appointed and established by Him.

Take it the other Way, and you will see the other Part of the Sentence verified. *Unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have Abundance.* For when Men begin be-times, before their Passions have laid too strong hold upon them, they find the Practice of Virtue easy to them, and every Day produces some new Improvement. The Perfection of Virtue consists in the facility and readiness to do virtuous Things; and this will be forever increasing in proportion as by Use and Custom they grow more habitual and familiar. It is in the Use of our moral Talents as in the Use of our Money. He that sets out upon a small Stock finds it hard to live; but when Industry hath improved the little Stock into a great one, Wealth flows in apace; every Pound, like so much Seed cast into the Earth, multiplying itself in great Proportion.

And as it is by the Gifts of Nature, so it is by the Gifts of Grace; I mean the inward Assistance of the holy Spirit by which *God worketh in us both to will and to do accord-*

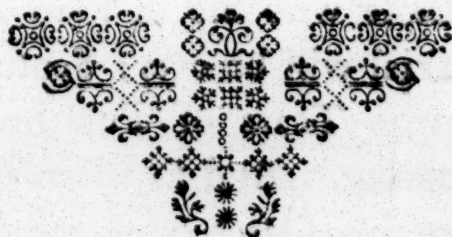
ing to his good Pleasure. Our natural Powers we bring into the World with us, and they are left under the Direction of our own Wills. The Aids of Grace God hath reserved in his own Hands, to be dispensed when, and to whom, and in what Proportion he sees meet. To give an easy and familiar Idea of them, we may consider them as something analogous to the Admonitions of a Parent, or the Counsels of a Friend, of the Use and Necessity of which we have daily Experience in human Life. It is not enough for us to have a Law before us, unless we have some Helps at hand to awaken our Attention; to pull us back when we are going out of the Way, or if we have erred, to shew us again the right Path that we may not wander and be lost for ever. Now God is not to be seen as Man is seen; nor do we hear him by an audible Voice (as we hear our Parents or our Friends) calling us to Repentance and Amendment of Life; But he doth that which is equivalent to it; he moves our Hearts by the secret and silent Influences of his Spirit, which stand as a Check upon our natural Corruptions, and are laid as a Weight on the Side of Conscience to give its Dictates the greater Force and Efficacy

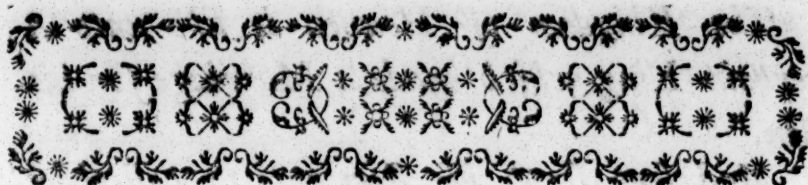
Efficacy. As many are lost who might have been preserved by the Advice of a Friend seasonably offered; so we should all of us be lost, were it not for this kindly Interposition of God to strengthen our natural Weaknesses; and therefore we may be sure that none shall want this Aid whom he calls by the Gospel, and who so behave as to deserve the Continuance of it. But what think you? A Parent will admonish his Child; and a Friend advise his Friend-----how long? Why so long as there is Hope, and no longer. When we see Men profiting by good Advice, it is an Encouragement to continue our Assistance as further Occasions shall make it proper. A man is pleased with rearing up an ingenuous Mind, as he is with teaching an apt Scholar, or with sowing and ploughing his Land, when the Produce pays him for his Expence and Trouble. But when good Counsel is thrown away, a wise Man will for the future hold his Tongue, as Solomon advises, Prov. ix. 7, 8. *Reprove not a Scornor lest he hate thee, and thou gettest to thyself Shame; and our Saviour, Matt. vii. 6. Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your*

Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet and turn again and rent you. It is the most melancholly Circumstance of the Condition of profligate Sinners, and what makes their Case desperate, that they are oftentimes abandoned both by God and Man. We cannot set Bounds to the Patience and Forbearance of God, nor say to what lengths he will suffer Men to go, before he takes from them his Grace, and gives them over to a reprobate Mind. The Parable sets forth, that it was *after a long Time* that the Lord came and called his Servants to a reckoning; which was intended, no doubt, to shew us, that God is patient and merciful to Sinners, and is a Reason why no bad Man should ever so far despair as not to be willing to try his best. Yet on the other Hand since though we are certain that God will bear long with Sinners, we cannot be certain how long he will bear with Us; it must be our Wisdom when we find ourselves deep in his Accounts, to be afraid that the present Opportunity may be the last; and to endeavour to make up a clear Reckoning whilst the possibility remains, lest if we suffer the Debt still to grow and encrease, the Day
of

of Grace should escape us unawares, and we should be involved beyond all Redemption. The Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorting us to *look diligently lest any Man fail of the Grace of God*, backs his Exhortation with the Example of Esau, who *when he would have inherited the Blessing was rejected, and found no Place for Repentance though he sought it carefully with Tears.* Heb. xii. 15,---17. This is not intended to teach us, that the truly Penitent shall at any Time be rejected, but it shews that there may be a Time when we shall be sorry for our Sins without Remedy. The Day of Judgment will be that Time to those who die in their Sins; for then our Trial will be over; Sentence must pass, and the Tears of Punishment will avail us nothing. And so when God hath taken away his Grace and not left Men Hearts to repent; he may have left them Sense enough to see both their Sin and their Danger, which will yield sufficient Cause of Lamentation. But the Issue we may read in the Words of Solomon, Prov. i. 24. with which I shall conclude. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand and no Man regarded; but*

but ye have set at nought all my Counsel and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.



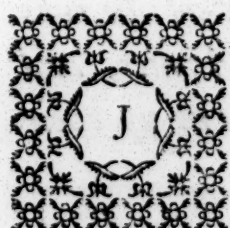


S E R M O N XX.



MATTHEW xxii. 2.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King which made a Marriage for his Son. And sent forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding, and they would not come.

ESUS was now in the Temple; when the Scribes and Pharisees came to him and demanded, *by what Authority he did these Things.* Chap. xxi. 23. This Parable gives an Answer to the Question, and shews, who sent him----to what Purpose he was sent, and----how much it concerned them to attend to his preaching. Take the whole in our Saviour's own Words,

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The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King which made a Marriage for his Son.

And sent forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding; and they would not come.

Again he sent forth other Servants, saying tell them which are bidden; behold I have prepared my Dinner: My Oxen and my Fatlings are killed, and all Things are ready; come unto the Marriage.

But they made light of it and went their Ways, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize:

And the Remnant took his Servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them.

But when the King heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his Armies, and destroyed those Murderers, and burnt up their City.

Then saith he to his Servants, the Wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

Go ye therefore into the high Ways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the Marriage.

So those Servants went out into the high Ways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the Wedding was furnished with Guests.

And

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a Man which had not on a Wedding-Garment.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding Garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the King to the Servants, bind him Hand and Foot and take him away, and cast him into outer Darknes; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.

For many are called, but few are chosen.

To explain now the Particulars of this Parable.

The King sending forth his Servants to invite Guests to the Marriage of his Son, is God calling Mankind to the Gospel, by the preaching of the Apostles. It is to be remarked, that this Call to the Gospel by the Apostles was not the first Invitation; for they were sent to call *them that were bidden*; which implies that some had been invited before. And these were the People of the Jews, who had long and early Notice of this Grace to be dispensed to Mankind in God's due Time, by the *Oracles of God to them committed*. Christ himself tells the Jews, that the *Scriptures testified of him*; (Luke v. 39.) that is, of his coming;

coming; which was foretold by the Prophets in different Ages of the Church. John the Baptist was sent to warn them that *the Time was at Hand*; Matt. iii. 2. and the Purport of the preaching of the Apostles was, that it was *now come*, and that Christ was the Person appointed of God to *redeem Israel*. Nor were they once only thus invited; but, when unmindful of the first Notices, God *sent out other Servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, behold I have prepared my Dinner; my Oxen and my Fatlings are killed, and all Things are ready, come unto the Marriage*: Which represents to us the frequent, repeated Applications which God made to the Jews by the Preachers of the Gospel, after their first Call by Christ and his Apostles; by which he is to be understood not as barely inviting, but as pleading with his People, in some such Address as any Man would use to his Friend on a like Occasion. “ Why
“ are you so unkind as to refuse my Invi-
“ tation, when I have made such costly
“ Preparation for your Entertainment?
“ Come, I beseech you, and let me not be
“ disappointed in my Expectation.” This was great Condescension on the Part of
God;

God ; and yet such as had been familiar to him. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil Ways ; for why will ye die, O House of Israel ?* Ezek. xxxiii. 11, and xviii. 31. Yet thus kindly invited, thus affectionately, as it were, intreated, they *made light of God's Call, and went their Ways ; one to his Farm, another to his Merchandise.* Some of them did worse, and added Contumely to Contempt ; for they *took his Servants, whom he had sent to invite them, and entreated them spitefully and slew them ;* of which cruel Treatment our blessed Saviour prophetically complains, Matt. xxiii. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not !* Their Punishment follows---*Behold ! your House is left unto you desolate.* And here, in the Parable, it is said, that *when the King heard thereof he was wroth, and he sent forth his Armies, and destroyed those Murderers, and burnt up their City ;* which was fully verified

fied in the great and final Overthrow of the Jewish Commonwealth by the Roman Power; when their City and their Temple were burnt to Ashes, and *not one Stone was left upon another that was not thrown down.*

The Gospel having met with so ill a Reception among the Jews; the remaining Part of the Parable opens to us the next Step determined by Providence, which was to offer it to the Gentiles. *Then saith the King to his Servants, the Wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the High-ways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the Marriage.* In the same Parable as recorded by St. Luke, Chap. xiv. Vers. 16, the Expression varies, but the Sense is the same. *Go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor and the Maimed, and the Halt and the Blind.* And again---*Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in.* The Streets and Lanes, the High-ways and Hedges, are Places of common Resort, in which no Man has Property. This therefore fitly describes the Heathen World as distinguished from the Jews, who were God's Peculiar. *They are stiled the Children of the Covenant.*

Acts

Acts iii. 25. To them *pertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Promises.* Rom. ix. 4. The Gentiles were *Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World.* Eph. ii. 12. This is the Reason of the Distinction. But the Time was now come when they *who were not a People* were to be made a People. 1 Pet. ii. 10. The Jews had the Privilege of the first Offer, as the first born of God; but they having refused, the Gentiles were to be taken in, as the Apostles Paul and Barnabas told them. Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting Life; lo! we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us.* What was the Consequence? Why, the Gentiles accepted what the Jews had refused; for thus it follows in the Parable. *So those Servants went out into the Highways, (that is among the Gentiles) and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the Wedding was furnished with Guests.* It is not to be supposed that all who were called among the Gentiles accepted the Gospel, nor does the Pa-

erable say so much. All that can be inferred is, that great Numbers came in, which in fact was true. But of these some came in by Profession only; for there was a Mixture of *good* and *bad* together. Now observe what follows. *And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a Man which had not on a Wedding-Garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a Wedding-Garment?* The Meaning is, that he saw a Man not habited or dressed in such a Manner, as was suitable to the Solemnity; which was offering an Affront instead of shewing Respect. It may be suggested perhaps that the King should have accepted of such Guests as he had called; and that Persons equipped in such a Manner as to be fit to appear at a royal Banquet, are not likely to be found in the High-ways and Hedges. Is there any Man so mean as not have his Holyday Coat?--- But it should be considered that the Dress and Ornaments of the Body answer in the Comparison to the Graces and Virtues of the Mind, which they who live in the High-ways and Hedges may provide for themselves, as well as they who live in Palaces; and with which whoever is not properly

perly furnished, he may make Profession of being Christ's Disciple, but he will not be accepted. One of this Sort the Parable says the King saw among his Guests. There were many such among the first Professors of the Gospel, as there have been ever since : But the Parable mentions but one, to serve as an Example to all the rest. And the Example is dreadful : *Bind him Hand and Foot and take him away, and cast him into outer Darknes; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.* That is many are called and many come, but all that come are not *choice* or *chosen* Men, such as God will accept as fit for his Kingdom. The Expression is taken from common Practice, in almost all Cases where there is a Mixture of good and bad Things together; which is to pick out and separate those which are fit for Use, and to throw the rest away. The Servants (as we have seen) *gathered together all that they found*, that is, all that were willing to come, *both bad and good.* The King now separates them one from the other; reserves the Good to sit down with him at his Table, and orders the Bad to be *taken away and cast into outer Darknes.* Our Saviour hath

exemplified this by a Variety of Parables; as by the *Tares in the Wheat*, and the *Net that was cast into the Sea*, and gathered of every Kind; which when it was full they drew to Shore, and sat down and gathered the good into Vessels; but cast the bad away. So (says our Saviour) *shall it be at the End of the World. The Angels shall come forth, and sever the Wicked from the Just, and shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.* Matt. xiii. 47---51. See the Parable of the Net. Matt. xiii. 47.

The Parable being thus explained, let us now point out those Lessons of Instruction which are contained under it. And,

1. We are taught by this Parable, that the Gospel is an Appeal to the Reason and Understanding of Men, who are to judge for themselves, and accept or refuse as they shall be disposed. The very Comparison leads to this Notion. For the Call to the Gospel is as an Invitation to a Feast. Now if you have a mind to entertain a Man at your Table, you invite and perhaps entreat his Acceptance: But would you think it right, in such a Case, to beat him, or to tear his Cloaths off his Back, to make him come?

come? To what Purpose? When you invite a Man to an Entertainment, you mean him a Favour; and when this Favour is freely and willingly accepted, there is a mutual Respect. In this lies the whole Virtue of the Thing. But when a Favour is slighted, to enforce the Acceptance of it, is to be troublesome, instead of doing a Kindness, which brings back no Honour to a Man's self; for Honour, in the very Notion of it, is a free and a voluntary Tribute. When Force is applied in such Cases as these; what is it that you force? Why, not the Man, but the Carcass or animal Machine. It is just as if you should open your Doors to a Statue, or a Piece of Clock-work, and drag it in by Pullies and Wheels; with this Difference only, that as the Statue could do you no Honour, so neither could it give you Offence. But should a Man, whom you had invited to your Table, come only for Fear of offending you by a Refusal, and you should plainly perceive that his Heart was not well with you, would you think yourself honoured? The Cases are exactly parallel. For all that Christ or his Apostles could have forced, was the mere external

Profession ; which was so far from being the Thing intended by the preaching of the Gospel, that those, you see, who came upon being invited, but came without the *Wedding-Garment*, (that is who came by Profession only) were not accepted.

It is very true, that in St. Luke's Account of this Parable, the King is represented as saying to his Servants, *Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that my House may be filled.* Luke xiv. 23. But what Sort of Compulsion was this ? Plainly not a Compulsion by external Force, but that Sort of Compulsion which every Man feels when he is overcome by Entreaty and Persuasion. The Greek Word which we translate *compel*, signifies no more than to *necessitate* or *constrain*, which Expressions are frequently used, where, not external Force but, some urgent Cause or Reason is to be understood. Thus it is said of Christ, that he *constrained his Disciples to get into a Ship.* Matt. xiv. 22. So the two Disciples going to Emmaus, *constrained Christ, saying, abide with us.* Luke xxiv. 29. So *Lydia constrained Paul and Silas to go into her House.* Acts xvi.

xvi. 15. So *Paul* was constrained to appeal unto *Cæsar*. Chap. xxviii. 19. So he was necessitated to preach the Gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 16.---But the Practice of Christ and his Apostles is the best Comment upon this Text; who never pretended (as indeed they had not Power) to compel any by Force to profess the Gospel whom they could not win by Persuasion. The Word of Salvation was offered: As many as accepted it were received; and the rest were left in their Blindness. This was the constant Method, according to the general Direction given by our Saviour when he first sent his Apostles to preach the Gospel: *Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your Words, when ye depart out of that City or House shake off the Dust of your Feet.* Matt. x. 14. There can be no Doubt but that God, if he had so pleased, had Power to have propagated the Profession of the Gospel by Force; as Mahomet did the Profession of his Religion. But he thought fit to order it otherwise; that it might stand as a lasting Testimony to the Honour of that Faith which was to be made the Religion of the World. For hereby it appears, that whatever Progress it made (as indeed the Pro-

gress was very great) the Success was entirely owing to its own intrinsic Excellence, and the mighty Power of God working, by the Hands of those who preached, and in the Hearts of those who believed. Had Christ propagated his Religion by Force, it might with Reason have been said, "What Marvel that he found
"Profelites, when there was no Room left
"for Choice?" But it is not so easy to account how such Numbers of Men, left to the Guidance of their own Reasons, should have laid aside their inbred Prejudices and embraced a new Religion, not only without Force, but even against Force, had not the Evidences of its Truth been very conspicuous, and come upon them with a Weight and Strength not to be withstood. Especially if you consider, that there was nothing in this Religion that courted the corrupt Passions of Men; but, on the contrary, it enjoined the strictest Purity of Life; a Lesson, under any Circumstances, hard to be practised, and to the first Converts of the Heathen Nations peculiarly so, as by the false Maxims of their old Religion, they had been indulged in the greatest Licentiousness of Manners. But,

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2. Though God left Mankind at Liberty either to accept or refuse the Gospel, (for any outward Force that there was to compel them) yet in the Exercise of this Liberty they stood accountable to Him, and made themselves obnoxious to his Justice, if they wilfully withstood the Truth, and rejected those Manifestations of the divine Will, which (the Weight of the Evidence considered) they had all the Reason in the World to receive and embrace. This appears from that Part of the Parable where the King is represented as being *wroth* with those who mal-treated and *slew his Servants*, and as *sending forth his Armies to destroy those Murderers and burn up their City*; and more plainly from that declaration of our Saviour, in the Passage of St. Matthew, just now cited (and in other places of Scripture) *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your Words, when ye depart out of that City or House shake off the Dust off your Feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah at the Day of Judgment, than for that City.* Matt. x. 14, 15. There is a plain Difference between using Severity to force an outward Profession
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of Religion whether a Man sees it reasonable or not ; and using Severity in the Way of Punishment for the Neglect of Duty. The first Christ would not do, because it was improper ; but the last is necessary, as without it God's Government cannot stand. If God, when the Gospel was published, had not given sufficient Notice to Mankind that it was his own Work ; that it was He who called them by Christ and his Apostles ; he would have had no Cause to have expected their Obedience. But the Parable represents it to us as sufficiently notified ; for the King is said to have sent the Message of Invitation, not by any one he might chance to pick up in the Streets, but, by *his own Servants*, that there might be no Doubt or Scruple left from whom the Invitation came. So God sent his own Servants to publish the Gospel. And how did it appear that they were his Servants ? Why by the Credentials they brought in their Hands. The Servants of Princes and great Men are known by their outward State and Equipment ; by appearing in a manner suitable to their Master's Rank and Quality ; and this it is that gives them
Credit

Credit when they tell you whose Servants they are. By the like Tokens Mankind was sufficiently instructed (if they would have bestowed proper Attention and Reflection) that the first Preachers of the Gospel were the Servants of the most high God; that they came to them in his Name, and by his Authority; for they came instructed with the Power of God, visible in the Signs and Wonders that were wrought by their Hands. To this Evidence Christ frequently appeals in his Discourses with the Jews, and tells them that their refusing to receive his Doctrine was not owing to this, that they wanted Proof of his divine Missions, but to the Corruption of their own Hearts. *He that is of God heareth God's Words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.* Joh. viii. 47. Again; Chap. iii. Vers. 19. after having said that *he that believeth not is condemned, because he believeth not*; he adds, (as the Reason of *this Condemnation*) that *Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.* This likewise is suggested in the Parable. For how did it happen that those who were invited to
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the Wedding-Feast refused to come? Was it because they had any reasonable Cause of Doubt that it was the King who invited them? No; but it was because they had other Matters at Heart. The first said, *I have bought a Piece of Ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.*---Another had *bought five Yoke of Oxen*----Another had *married a Wife.*---Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20. The Moral of which in the Application of the Parable to Unbelievers is, that the Things of this World had so much occupied their Thoughts, that they found no Leisure to attend to the Things of God; and will you say that such as these do not deserve Punishment? We are to suppose that the Parable represents this Matter as it generally was and is, without attending to those few (for comparatively they are but few) excepted Cases, where the Gospel fails of its proper Effect through mere Weakness of Understanding in those to whom it is offered; in which Cases as it is always in God's Power, so doubtless it will ever be in his Will, to make the proper equitable Abatements. But certainly if you consider Unbelief as an Act of Contempt; (which it will

will be when we cherish and indulge those Corruptions in our Hearts, which hinder us from perceiving the Force of that Evidence upon which the Gospel is established) it is a Sin of the first Magnitude, and will be followed with the severest Punishment: For it is defeating, so far as in us lies, the Purposes of God, in a Point which appears to be of the greatest Weight and Consequence in the Scheme of his Providence. A King making a Marriage for his Son is a most important Transaction in the Matter of human Government; such the Parable represents God's calling us to Salvation by the Gospel to be in his Government; and how little soever we understand (and little indeed it is that we do understand) of the Reasons why God chose this Method of Salvation rather than any other; it ought to content us that this is the Method he has chosen, and which we are bound to attend to at the Peril of our everlasting Interest. For thus our Saviour warns us, Joh. xii. 47. *If any Man bear my Words and believe not, I judge him not, (that is, I now judge him not) for I came not to judge the World but to save the World. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my Words*

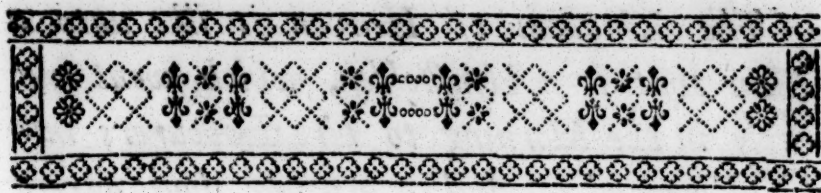
Words bath one that judgeth him ; the Word that I have spoken the same shall judge him at the last Day.

3. When we have embraced the Gospel our next Care must be to practice it. For the Close of the Parable shews us, of how little avail the outward Profession of Christianity will be, without a Life suitable to that Profession. The Servants never considered, who among the Guests they had invited had the *Wedding-Garment*, and who had it not. It was not their Business; nor is it, nor was it the Business of the Preachers of the Gospel to consider, Who comes to Christ with Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart. They are not qualified for it; but must receive all who offer themselves to Christ. But the King when he came *to see the Guests*, made a Distinction; and so will Christ at the Day of Judgment, which is the Time pointed at by the Comparison. God doth not come to *see* us in this World. This is the Time of inviting and gathering Company. But he comes to see us when he comes to judge us; and that will be in the next World, where his Feast is prepared, and when those who shall be found worthy shall

shall sit *together with him in heavenly Places*: But those who are unworthy; those who have not on the *Wedding-Garment*, shall be *cast into outer Darknefs*. What is this *Wedding-Garment*? It is that Guise, Frame and Habit of the Soul, which suits the Condition of those who have professed the Gospel. It is Faith, and Repentance, and Righteousness towards God. This is the Point to which the Gospel would bring us; and those who stop short of it, defeat the End of Christ's Coming. And what will such have to say to excuse themselves when he shall ask every one of them, *Friend how camest thou in hither?* "What hast thou to do among my Disciples? What Pretence to offer thyself to be one of my Guests?" The unhappy Man in the Parable, we are told *was speechless*; that is, he had nothing to say for himself, ashamed (as we may suppose) and convicted by his own Conscience. And surely every wicked Christian must stand dumb and confounded before his Almighty Judge, when he considers the Professions he hath made; the Means he hath neglected; the Contempt he hath offered to his Lord and Saviour by his ungodly Works. We are to profess Christ
with

with our Mouths; but what is the Profession of the Mouth without the Obedience of the Heart? We are to attend to the outward Means which Christ hath appointed for our Edification and Improvement in Knowledge and in Virtue; such as hearing and reading his holy Word, frequenting his Worship and Ordinances. But all this without the true inward Reformation is nothing or worse than nothing. These are Helps suited to our present State of Infirmary, and will be of no farther Use when this Life shall have an End; and if, when stript of their outward Furniture, our Souls shall stand before him naked, filthy, and deformed, he will loath and abhor us; and so much the more, because we have been Partakers of his Grace and have received it in vain. *Because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged of thy Filthiness any more till I have caused my Fury to rest upon thee. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I repent; according to thy Ways and according to thy Doings will I judge thee, saith the Lord God.* Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

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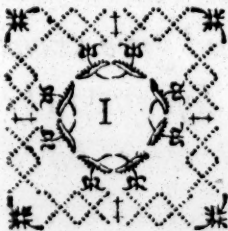


S E R M O N X X I .



MATTHEW XX. 16.

So the last shall be first, and the first last-----

 F we go back to the foregoing Chapter, Vers. 27. we shall find Peter saying unto Jesus, *Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee ; what shall we have ?* To which Jesus answers----*Every one that hath forsaken House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my Names sake, shall receive an hundred Fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life-----and adds, But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.* This our Saviour illustrates by a Parable ; which for your Ease I shall recite.

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The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is a Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard. And when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a Day, he sent them into his Vineyard. And he went out about the third Hour and saw others standing idle in the Market Place, and said unto them, go ye also into the Vineyard and whatsoever is Right I will give you----In like manner, about the sixth, ninth, and eleventh Hours----So when Even was come the Lord of the Vineyard saith unto his Steward; call the Labourers and give them their Hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when They came that were hired about the eleventh Hour, they received every Man a Penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every Man a Penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good Man of the House saying; these last have wrought but one Hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us who have born the Heat and Burden of the Day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no Wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a Penny?

Take

Take that thine is and go thy Way; I will give unto the last even as unto Thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine Eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first and the first last; for many be called but few chosen.

It is for the Illustration of this concluding Passage, *the last shall be first and the first last*, that the Parable was spoken; as the Connexion shews. *For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Householder, &c.* that is, in ordering the Affairs of his spiritual Kingdom, God will deal by Mankind as the Householder did by the Labourers whom he called into his Vineyard, some early in the Morning and others at the eleventh Hour, where the *first* and the *last* were both treated alike. To come at the true Meaning of the Parable, therefore, we must consider to what Sort of Men the Comparison will best agree, or who were those *first* who were called into God's Vineyard early in the Morning, and who those *last* who were called at the eleventh Hour; and these again were the Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are stiled *the first*, or (as it is in

the Parable above explained) those who had been *bidden* some Time ago ; because they were God's People by ancient Inheritance, in Virtue of the Covenant made with their Forefathers ; with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their State therefore is fitly represented in the Parable by those Labourers who were hired early in the Morning ; as the State of the Gentiles is, by those who were invited in at the eleventh Hour : For they were under no Covenant with God as the Jews were, nor did God ever make them the Offers of Salvation by sending Prophets among them, till, as it were in the Close of the Day, in *the last Days* (as the Apostle styles it) he *spoke unto them by his Son*, the great Prophet of All. And whereas the Parable sets forth that the Lord of the Vineyard made no Difference in Point of Wages between those Labourers who were hired early in the Morning, and those who were called at the eleventh Hour, but the last as well as the first *received every man a Penny* ; this is intended to shew us that the Gentiles, though late called, if they accepted the Offer vouchsafed them, should be entitled to the same Benefits

Benefits with the Jews, without any Regard to ancient Prerogative. Thus *the last* were *first*, that is, put upon the same Foot of Advantage with the first. And so the *first* should be *last*; that is they should lose their Privilege as the People of God, and should stand in the Condition of Heathens (who as such were Strangers from his Covenant) if they embraced not the Gospel. The Parable does not enter into this latter Part of our Saviour's Meaning. For it speaks of Labourers who went into the Vineyard and received their Wages; but it says nothing of any Labourers who were turned out of the Vineyard, because they refused to accept of the Wages offered. But there are other Parables in which the State of the unbelieving Jews is plainly represented; one we have in the next Chapter under the Similitude of another *Houfholder which planted a Vineyard----and let it out to Husbandmen*; who, when he *sent his Servants that they might receive the Fruits----beat one and killed another, and stoned another, and last of all slew his Son*. This Parable points at the Behaviour of the Jews, from the Time that they were

first called to be God's People, to the coming of Christ; disobeying and persecuting his Prophets which he sent to them from Time to Time, and at last *crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory*. Upon which Case our Saviour puts this Question, *when the Lord of the Vineyard cometh what will he do unto those Husbandmen?* And the Answer is, *he will miserably destroy those wicked Men, and will let out his Vineyard to other Husbandmen, who shall render him the Fruits in their Seasons.*

We have the same Representation in the Parable of the *Wedding* (before explained) when those who had been bidden would not come, but slew the Servants whom the King had sent to invite them. This Parable begins where the other ends; and represents the Behaviour of the Jews to the Apostles of Christ, who were sent to invite them to accept the Gospel. They had been bidden long before. Their Covenant, which pointed to Christ and had its completion in Christ, was the Seal of their Privilege. What now follows upon this undutiful Behaviour, when they were admonished that the King was ready to receive them? Why (as you have already heard)

heard) the King was wroth, and sent forth his Armies and destroyed those Murderers and burned up their City; and saith to his Servants, the Wedding is ready, but they which were bidden (meaning the Jews) were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the High Ways (meaning among the Gentiles) and as many as ye shall find, bring to the Marriage. Here the first were the last, and the last first. The Jews are cast off from being God's People upon their rejecting the Gospel, and the Gentiles are taken in upon their receiving it; and of this our Saviour gave them express Warning. I say unto you that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer Darknes, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Matt. viii. 11, 12. And again, Luke xiii. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down in

the Kingdom of God. And behold there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. Here the Words of the Text are applied to the very Case of God's Casting off the Jews for their Unbelief, and his taking in those of the Gentiles who should embrace the Gospel; which places the Explication given beyond the Reach of Exception.

The general Doctrine of the Text being thus cleared, let us next attend to the Reason of it as it lies in the Parable. The Jews valued themselves much upon their Prerogative as the Sons of Abraham; and the telling them that now this Prerogative was to be at an End, and the Jews and Gentiles put upon the same Foot, was likely to give great Offence; as in Fact it did afterwards, when the Time was come that a Door of Faith was to be opened to the Gentiles. For nothing stuck with the Jews so much as this, *that the Gentiles should be fellow Heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of the Promises of God by the Gospel*, as St. Paul speaks, Eph. iii. 6. This is represented to us in that Part of the Parable, where

where those Labourers who were hired early in the Morning are introduced as *murmuring against the good Man of the House, and saying, these last have wrought but one Hour and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have born the Heat and Burden of the Day.* But what says the Lord to one of them, and in him to them all? *Friend I do thee no Wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a Penny? Take that thine is and go thy Way----*Is it not lawfull for me to do what I will with mine own? *Is thine Eye evil because I am good?* In which Words our Saviour gives the Jews to understand, that this Proceeding was no Contravention of the Covenant made with their Fathers. They had their Bargain. The Salvation promised was before them if they would accept it, and if God was determined to extend the same Grace to the Gentiles also, what was that to them? If I pay to one Man a Debt of twenty Shillings, and give to another the same Sum; am I to be called to account for it? Observe here the Condescension of our blessed Lord. He argues with the Jews as if they had some Merit to plead in Consequence of their being Children of the Covenant. As if
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they had done some great Matter beneficial to God, for which they might claim Wages in the Way of an Equivalent. Whereas God's Covenant was from the Beginning to the Conclusion of it, an Act of Mercy, to the Jews themselves as well as to the Gentiles, between whom the true and only Distinction was that the one was called to Mercy sooner than the other; and was this a fit Cause of Boasting? But take it in the Light the Parable represents it, and say, that here was so much Work done for so much Wages to be received; if you are offered the Wages contracted for, have you not Cause to be content? Cause there is no Doubt; and as that Servant who should refuse to accept his Wages honestly and punctually offered, because his Master thought fit to give another as much, who had earned less, would very justly be turned off and left to starve; so those of the Jews who stumbled at the Gospel because the Gentiles were called in to be Sharers with them in the Benefits of it, were as justly struck off from their ancient Privileges and left under the Curse, to inherit Wrath and Condemnation.

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From the whole then give me Leave to make the following Observations.

I. From the Explanation of the Parable it is plain, that it gives no Encouragement to any Hopes which those, who have received the Gospel and look for Salvation by Christ, may conceive from the Efficacy of a late Repentance. That at what Time soever a Sinner repents and turns to God he shall be accepted, is the great Charter of the Gospel. This was intended to encourage Men at all Times to repent, not to sin with Security. And yet this Use is made of it by many, who take little Care to reform their Lives at present, under a Notion, that if they do at any Time repent before they die, though ever so late, it will go just as well with them in the next World as if they had done it sooner; for which they are wont to alledge, that the Labourers in the Gospel who came into the Vineyard at the eleventh Hour, had the same Reward with those who were hired in the Morning and had *born the Heat and Burden of the Day*. But what Similitude is there between these two Cases? The Labourers who came not into the Vineyard till the eleventh Hour, are,
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in the Parable, those who were not called till the eleventh Hour. But the late Penitent, who lives under the Means of the Gospel, has been long called, and long refused to come, any more than in outward Shew and Profession. The Parable therefore has nothing to do with this Case; nor can the reasoning contained in it, be applied to it with any Sort of Justice or Propriety. For in offering the Means of Salvation by the Gospel, God does (as I have before observed) an Act of Mercy; and this is fitly represented by the Case of a Master distributing Money to his Servants, not according to the Proportion of their Work, but according to the Measure of of his own Goodness. In this Case he might reasonably reply to those who found Fault, *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?* But in dispensing the Rewards of a Life to come to those who have had these Means in their Hands, and are to be judged by their Use of them, God takes upon himself to distribute Justice; and here it is plain, that the Proportion of every Man's Work must be taken into Consideration, If the Householder, instead of bargaining with any of the Labourers

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at a certain Rate, had called them all together and told them, that every Man should be paid according to his Earnings; he would hereby have tied himself down to distribute Justice; and in this Case it would have been reasonable that they who had done most Work should have received most Wages. He could not then have pleaded that what he gave was *his own*; for what he had agreed to give by special Contract was no longer *his own*. Now God hath expressly told us, that at the great Day of Account, he *will reward every Man according to his Works*; and therefore in Proportion to his Improvements, which is clearly represented to us in the Parable of the Pounds, as it is recorded Luke xix. 12. The Nobleman that went into a far Country to receive for himself a Kingdom and to return, is Christ appearing in the Flesh to make himself a Church upon Earth. The ten Pounds which he delivered to his ten Servants to trade withall, denotes the Gospel equally offered to all. His commanding those Servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the Money, that he might know how much every Man had gained by trading, represents the Day of Judgment, when

Christ

Christ shall call all Nations before him, to give an Account of their Works. Here then the Case is exactly stated. And what is the Event? Was every Man that had his Pound delivered to him rewarded equally? No, but every Man was rewarded according to his Improvements; for he that had *gained ten Pounds* had *Authority* given him *over ten Cities*; and he that had *gained five* was *set over five*. Even thus it shall be in the next World. All that repent, be it sooner or later, shall be accepted. But to what shall they be accepted? Why, to such a Reward as their moral State qualifies them for. To an equal Reward if their Improvements have been equal; and to different Rewards if their Improvements have been different. This is the plain Truth of the Case. So that if you will but consider, how unlikely a Thing it is, that those who repent upon a Death-bed only, or in the Decline of Life, when there is but little Time left in which to work out their Salvation, should be equal Proficients with those who have begun early and gone on industriously, grafting one Improvement upon another; you will quickly perceive who they are that take the
most

most reasonable Course; and that by throwing away our younger Years, we may probably lose those Advantages, which all our future Industry will not be able to redeem. I do not deny the Possibility of a Death-bed Repentance, nor the Availableness of it to Salvation, when it is hearty and sincere. He that repents, though late, shall (as I have said) be accepted as well as he who repenteth sooner. But it will be to a Reward proportionable to the Value of his Repentance as it is, not according to its Value as it might have been if he had repented sooner, and made greater Proficiency in Virtue and a good Life. And this will at all Times be a Reason why we should do our best, and be careful that we *lose not the Things whereunto we might attain*. If we are already good, it will be always worth our while to be growing still better. There is no such Thing as being too good or too happy!

2. From the reasoning in the Parable it is plain, that as the Jews had no just Cause of Complaint, that the Gentiles were called in to be Partakers with them of the Promise of God by the Gospel; so the Gentiles on their Part had no Cause to be

be offended that they were not called as early as the Jews. For since God's Call to both was an Act of free undeserved Mercy, it will follow, that he might call as well when, as whom, he thought fit, without being obliged to answer to his Creatures why he did so. We do not find that the Gentiles of those Times had any Scruples upon this Head ; but we have some in these Days, who make it an Objection against the Gospel, (sufficient in their Opinions to overthrow its Authority) that it was not offered to all Persons at all Times. What is this but calling God to account for his own Gifts ? Let us suppose that the good Man in the Parable had met with such Murmurers as these ; as for Instance, that when he applied himself to those whom he called into the Vineyard at the eleventh Hour, they should have turned away in Scorn and said, Why did you not come early in the Morning ? Or that when he came to those whom he hired in the Morning, they should have answered, Why did you not come Yesterday, or a Week, or a Month ago ? Would he not have had just Cause to have been offended ? In Points of natural Justice Men
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are tied down to Rules; but in distributing Favours, we all claim the Privilege to act by Discretion. A Man tills his Ground or he lets it lie fallow; he calls in Labourers, many or a few; he employs this Man or he employs that, just as he thinks fit. Has he not a Right so to do? Or will we deny that Liberty to God, which we take to ourselves? There are Reasons of Prudence indeed which determine the Conduct of wise Men in such Cases; and God does every Thing by the Direction of the highest Wisdom, upon which we must not presume to sit as Judges. The mere Wants of Mankind considered, it may to Us seem reasonable that the Benefits of God's Covenant should have been extended alike to all; but there may be Considerations respecting the general System of God's Providence, seen only to himself, that might enforce a different Way of proceeding. All that concerns Us is this: Hath the Gospel the proper Evidence of a divine Revelation? If it has, leaving the Reasons of this Dispensation to him to whom alone they belong, let us thankfully accept the Benefit. For:

3. If it was just in God to shut the Jews out of his Mercy for rejecting the Gospel,

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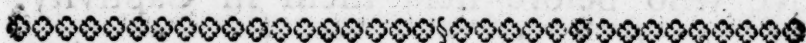
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and to take in the Gentiles who embraced it in their stead; we may most certainly conclude that the Gentiles also shall be cut off if they follow the same Example of Unbelief. So says St. Paul, Rom. xi. 20, 21. *Because of Unbelief they (the Jews) were broken off; thou (the Gentile) standest by Faith. Be not high minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural Branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.* Mercy there is for those who have never been called; but none for those who being called shall refuse to come, or who having once accepted shall afterwards fall away. So it is also to those who come indeed into the Vineyard, but do nothing when they are there; those who take the Name and Profession of Christians upon themselves, but do not the Duty of Christians. It is an unreasonable Thing for those who will not work to expect Wages. It is to the Diligent and Industrious that the Reward is promised. To idle, unprofitable Servants, who squander away their Lord's Money, or hide their Talents in the Earth, Correction belongs; and what their Wages shall be the Gospel has told us, *They shall be cast into outer Darknefs, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

S E R-



S E R M O N XXII.



EPHES. iv. 8.

When he ascended up on high he led Captivity captive, and received Gifts for Men.

THESE Words shew us the Effect and Consequence of Christ's Ascension. Let us first settle the Meaning of them.

He led Captivity captive; the same Expression which we have at the 68th Psalm, Verse 18, to which this Passage refers. *Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led Captivity captive; thou hast received Gifts for Men.* We meet with it again Judges v. 12. *Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a Song; arise Barak and lead thy Captivity captive.* This last Passage refers to the Victory obtained by Deborah

and Barak over Sisera, Captain of Jabin, King of Canaan, into whose *Hand* (as it is said Verse 2.) *the Lord had sold the Children of Israel*. The leading the Chieftains of this Host in Triumph (as was customary after great Victories) is called leading *their Captivity captive*; that is leading those captive who before held them in Captivity. The Sense is the same in the other two Places. That in Psalm lxviii. is a Prediction of Christ's Ascension, and so applied by the Apostle in the Text; and the Sense in both is, that when Christ ascended into Heaven, he led those captive who before had been Lords over others. It is not said of Christ, as it was said of Barak, that he led *his Captivity captive* (for he who was the Author of all Liberty, could himself be held in Bondage by none) but it is said, he led *Captivity captive*, that is, he led those captive who before had exercised Tyranny. And who were they? Why Sin and Death, and the Author of them both, the Devil and his wicked Spirits, under whom the whole human Race is, in Scripture, represented as having been in Bondage. Thus Heb. ii. 14, it is said of Christ, *That---he might destroy him that had the*
Power

Power of Death, that is the Devil; and deliver them, who, through Fear of Death, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage. And 2 Tim. ii. 26, bad Men are said to be in *the Snare of the Devil, taken captive by him at his Will.* Every bad Man is the Devil's Slave. For Sin is the Devil's Work, and Death is Sin's Wages. This fatal Chain Christ hath broken; taking away Sin by opening the Way to Repentance and Remission; and destroying Death by the Resurrection from the Dead. This is destroying the Devil's Kingdom; setting open his Prison Doors and knocking off his Fetters. This is called by St. Paul, *spoiling Principalities and Powers; making a Shew of them openly and triumphing over them.* Col. ii. 15.

In the next Place; Christ when he ascended up on high gave *Gifts unto Men.* The Psalmist hath expressed it thus: *Thou hast received Gifts for Men;* which comes exactly to the same Thing; for what Christ gave, that he first received from the Father. These Gifts were the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, to be distributed in their various Kinds among his faithful Servants, for the common Use and Benefit of his

Church, as it follows, Verse 11---14. *And he gave some, Apostles, and some, Prophets, and some, Evangelists, and some, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

The History of Christ's Ascension we have in the first Chapter of the Acts; where we read, that Christ *after his Passion shewed himself alive to his Apostles by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* The Body in which Christ appeared after his Resurrection, was the self-same Body in which he appeared before his Death, and which was laid in the Grave; as the Account of his Resurrection shews; Which Body being animated by the same living Soul, Christ was again become the same living Man. It was in this Body of Flesh and Blood, and Skin and Bones, that Christ was seen, conversed, and ate with his Disciples; and it was this self-same Body that afterwards ascend-
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ed into Heaven; for we read in the same Chapter of the Acts, that whilst he was in actual Conversation with his Apostles with whom he was *assembled*, and *while they beheld him*, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight. Whither he went they could not know any farther than their Sight would carry them; but to satisfy them in this, they had the divine Testimony: For *while they looked stedfastly toward Heaven*, as he went up, behold two Men stood by them in white Apparel; which also said, ye Men of Galilee, *why stand ye gazing up into Heaven. This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like Manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.* Acts i. Verse 10, 11. These two Men were none of their Company; and the Manner in which they are introduced by the Historian shews, that their Appearance was extraordinary and miraculous. So that the Apostles had the Evidence of their own Eyes, so far as that went, and, where that failed, the Evidence of a Miracle, to convince them that in the same Body in which Christ conversed with them on Earth, in that same Body he was carried up into Heaven.

This Event answered to the great Strokes of our Saviour's Character. He was appointed to be the Judge of Quick and Dead, and the Time of Judgment was not presently to come. The last Judgment is to be the Judgment of Mankind by the Gospel; and therefore it was necessary that the Gospel should be published throughout the World; which must be a Work of Time, longer or shorter, as God shall think fit. And as it was not fit that Christ should always continue upon Earth, but leave the Gospel to its proper natural Operations; where should he go in the mean time, but to Heaven, the Place from whence he came, and where he was with the Father from all Eternity? And as it suited the Wisdom of God, that he should judge the World in that same Nature by which he saved the World; therefore he went up alive both Soul and Body, and is sat down at the right Hand of God, in Power, and Majesty, and Glory, where he *ever liveth to make Intercession for us.* Heb. vii. 25. and ix. 24. Rom. viii. 34.

But it may be asked----What Relation hath Christ's Ascension into Heaven, with his destroying the Devil's Kingdom, and
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giving the Gifts of the Holy Ghost? As to the first, it is to be observed that the Destruction of the Devil's Kingdom, is (properly) the Effect of Christ's Death and Passion. So the Apostle, Heb. ii. 14, *That through Death he might destroy him that had the Power of Death.* And this is intimated to us in the Verses immediately following the Text. *Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he descended first into the lower Parts of the Earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended.* He that died, and was buried, and went up into Heaven, is one and the same Christ; which is mentioned to shew us, that our Deliverance from Sin and Death is no otherwise related to Christ's Ascension, than as it refers to and presupposes his Death and Sufferings. The Ascension of Christ was the Close of his Administration here on Earth, and answers to the Act of a Conqueror leading his Enemies in Triumph after he hath finished the War. It is the Sword that wins the Battle; the Triumph only shews it. And so, it was the Death of Christ that wrought our Salvation; the Accomplishment of which was declared by his Ascension into Heaven. So the Author

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to the Hebrews, Chap. ii. Verse 9. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the Sufferings of Death crowned with Glory and Honour; that he by the Grace of God should taste Death for every Man.* Christ was made *lower than the Angels* by becoming Man. He was *crowned with Glory and Honour* by his Ascension into Heaven; and this is expressly mentioned to have been the Reward of his Sufferings. So that the Ascension of Christ being the Reward of his Sufferings, it was a publick Testimony on the Part of God that his Mediation was accepted; and that, as he had undertaken to save Mankind, so Mankind by him was actually saved.

And there is not a less Affinity between Christ's Ascension, and the second Particular, the dispensing the Gifts of the Holy Ghost; for the one is properly the Ground and Foundation of the other. Now (says Christ) *I go my Way unto him that sent me, and---because I have said these Things unto you Sorrow hath filled you Hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the Truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him.* The Holy Ghost was
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not to come, till such a State of the Church was opened, as made his Presence necessary ; that is till the Time was fulfilled when the Gospel was to be published throughout the World ; and this was not to be till Christ's Ministry was at an End. The Ministry of Christ was local and confined ; and so was the Ministry of his Apostles during our Saviour's Life-time. *Go not into the Way of the Gentiles, and into any City of the Samaritans enter ye not ; but go rather to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel.* This was our Saviour's Charge to his twelve Apostles, when he called them, and sent them forth to preach, as we read, Matt. x. 5, 6. But after his Resurrection, and immediately before his Ascension into Heaven, their Commission runs in these Words : *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* Mark xvi. 15. The Apostles were Preachers of the Gospel among their own Countrymen, in Partnership with Christ himself ; but now that Christ was no longer to abide upon Earth, they were first made Preachers throughout the World. It would have been strange, that as their Work increased and grew more difficult, they should have less Assistance ;

ance; which yet would have been the Case if no Provision had been made to supply his Absence. But for this Purpose the Holy Ghost was sent to be their Guide, as our Saviour tells them, John xiv. 16. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth-----I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* Christ speaks of Himself as present by the Presence of the Holy Ghost. And in Effect, and to all Intents and Purposes, it was the same Thing; for he was to do every Thing for them that Christ would or could have done if he had been personally present. *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* Vers. 26.

That the Promise of the Holy Ghost, was relative to the Appointment of the Apostles to the great Work of preaching the Gospel throughout the World is plain from Act. i. 4. where we are told that Christ commanded his Apostles *not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father which, saith he, ye have heard of*

of me. And from what follows, Verſ. 8. *But ye ſhall receive Power after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you, and ye ſhall be Witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem and in in Judea, and in all Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt Part of the Earth.* They were to go from Jeruſalem into all the World; but they were firſt to wait for the Promiſe of the Father. They were to be Witneſſes unto Chriſt both in Jeruſalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt Part of the Earth; but not till after they had received the Power of the Holy Ghoſt. The one therefore was in Order to the other; as the Nature of the Gifts ſhews which were miraculous and extraordinary; and ſuch as were neceſſary to qualify them to execute their new Commiſſion. The Power of the Holy Ghoſt in the Apoſtles ſhewed itſelf in diſerſe Ways; as firſt and principally in the ſpeaking with Tongues; then in healing the Sick and Lame, and caſting out unclean Spirits, and raiſing the Dead to Life; all which was for *Confirmation of the Word*, and to ſhew that God himſelf ſpoke in and by them.

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This Promise then being relative to the first Propagation of the Gospel ; no Claim of extraordinary or miraculous Gifts can be founded upon it in after Times, when the Ends of Providence in this first Publication should be sufficiently answered. God may work Miracles by the Ministration of Men or otherwise whenever he thinks fit ; but if he should do it now, it would not be in Consequence of the Promise made to the Apostles and first Believers, but in Right of his Sovereign Authority, by which he may dispense his own Gifts according to the Purposes of his own Will. Christ hath indeed, else where, promised to his Apostles, that is to his Church, his perpetual Presence. *Lo ! I am with you alway even to the End of the World.* Matt. xxviii. 20. And Reason good ; for he was to govern and protect his Church to the End of the World ; and therefore it was Necessary that he should be with it to the End of the World. But how *with it* ? Why by miraculous Gifts, so far as such Gifts were necessary ; and when the Use of such Gifts should determine, always by such a Continuance of his Presence, as should be
necessary

necessary to Faith and a good Life. But it is to be observed that this Sort of Presence flows not simply from (though it be contained under) the Promise made by Christ; but from the general Grace and Mercy of the Covenant of Redemption as manifested from the Beginning, and running through all Dispensations. For David prays to God that he would *create* in him *a clean Heart* and *renew* in him *a right Spirit*; that he would not *cast him away from his Presence*, nor *take his Holy Spirit from him*. *Purge me with Hyssop* (says he) *and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than Snow*. Psalm. li. 7, 10, 11. And greatly it concerns us to cultivate this friendly Correspondence, between God and our own Souls; for though Christ hath saved us from Sin and Death, he hath yet done it in such a Way as to make our Concurrence necessary; insomuch that if we do not our Parts, in fact and reality we may not, we cannot, be saved.

This is the great Point which deserves the serious Attention of every Christian; that Christ hath no otherwise saved us, than to put it into our Power to save ourselves

selves. Whilst all Mankind were under the Curse, and the Sentence denounced against Adam's Transgression remained in full Force, no Flesh could be saved. But Christ hath done away the Curse, by being *made a Curse for us*. Through him we have the Promise of Remission of Sins and eternal Life: In this great Work he hath no Partner. But as he purchased Salvation for us by the Sacrifice of his Blood; so he hath reserved to himself the Right to dispense the Blessing upon his own Terms; which Terms are Faith and Repentance. Listen not then to those who tell you that "we have nothing to do but
" to throw ourselves upon Christ, as sinful Dust and Ashes that he may wash
" us in his Blood."----That "we are to
" carry nothing to him but our Sins to
" be taken away by him, and to receive
" Newness of Life from him." In these or such like Expressions (which are frequent in the Mouths of Enthusiasts) there is either no Truth or they are fallacious. If you would say that it is the Mercy of God in Christ alone that justifies us; it is true. For we can plead no Merit with God from our best Performances. *All*
have

have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, as the Apostle speaks. But it is not true that there is nothing left for us to do. For we must qualify our selves to be fit Objects of that Mercy; and this will find us Work enough if we will mind it. We must *mortify the Deeds of the Body*. We must *crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*; and if when we carry our Sins to Christ; we carry not our Repentance too, the Blood of Christ will avail us nothing. Repentance is a hard Work; and few Sinners, perhaps, would attempt it, if they thought that they could get to Heaven without it: And would it not give too great a Handle to this Delusion if they should be “warned against
 “it as a dangerous Error to think that any
 “Preparation is necessary to qualify us for
 “God’s Favour; and be told that they
 are to “come to Christ just as they are,
 “in all their Guilt, in all their Unclean-
 “ness, with all their Sin and Shame about
 “them?”---How different is this from the
 Language of the Gospel---*Repent and be
 baptized for the Remission of Sins!* Repen-
 tance then is a necessary Preparation in or-
 der to our coming to Christ; and must be

the Touchstone whereby to assure ourselves that we are worthy of the Grace offered by the Gospel ; which if you overlook, and conclude some (I know not what) impetuous Motions which you may feel within yourselves, to be the Work of the Spirit, and the Seal of your Acceptance with God, you will leave yourselves without any sure Ground to stand upon, and may fancy yourselves to be *the Children of God*, when you are *the Children of the Devil*.----But to proceed :

Hard as the Work of Repentance is, the Grace of God is sufficient for us, and will be vouchsafed to all who diligently seek him. *Without him we can do nothing*, as Christ himself tells us, and as the Apostle St. Paul more largely insists. *Ye are not in the Flesh but in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*----But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the Dead dwell in you ; he that raised up Christ from the Dead shall also quicken your mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, Brethren, we are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh ; for if ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye
through

through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the Sons of God. Rom. viii. 9.--14. You see here that mortifying the Deeds of the Body, is so Our Work, as to be the Work of the Spirit; and so His Work as to be also Ours. It is We that are to *mortify the Deeds of the Body*; but we must do it *through the Spirit*, that is by his Help and Assistance; which is a Matter to us both of Caution and Consolation: Of Consolation, that in all the Dangers that surround us, we have always Help at Hand equal to our Needs; and of Caution, to use Diligence in our heavenly Calling; that we may *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*, and take heed that we *receive not the Grace of God in vain*.

There can be no doubt but that God is near at Hand to every one of us; *for in him we live and move and have our Being.* Act. vii. 27, 28. Properly *in him*, because he surroundeth every Thing by his boundless Presence. But those to whom he will be present to help and assist them are those only who are worthy of him; and who those are he tells you himself by the Mouth

of his Prophet Ifaiah lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity whose Name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy Place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Heart of the contrite Ones.* Humility and Contrition are the first beginnings of Repentance; so early does God seek those who are willing to be found of him! We are too often wanting to ourselves, but God will never be wanting to Us; from the very lowest Degree of Proficiency in the Christian Life to its highest Perfection and Completion. The weakest Efforts of our natural Powers towards him, he will strengthen and improve; and from less Improvements he will carry us on to greater by a more plentiful Communication of himself; *for unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have Abundance.* Matt. xxv. 29. But all this upon Condition that we desire, and diligently seek him; for God will *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Luke xi. 13. This shews of what Consequence it is always to preserve a serious and devout Temper of Mind; disengaged, as much as may be, from the Cares and Vanities of the World, and at-
tentive

tentive to Prayer and to heavenly Things. But above all Things must we be careful to guard against the Inroads of brutal Passions, which *defile the Temple of God*, and make it an Habitation unfit for the Spirit to dwell in. *Flee Fornication*, says St. Paul; for *know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? And if any Man defile the Temple of God him shall God destroy.* 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19, and iii. 17. What marvel is it then that careless or wicked Men should every Day grow worse and worse; running on from Folly to Folly, and from Sin to Sin, till at last they grow hardened in Iniquity, and *being past feeling work all Uncleanness with Greediness?* Eph. iv. 19. The Cause is this: They drive from themselves the Holy Spirit of God; who in Proportion as the Heart grows more unclean visits them with fewer Communications of his Grace, till being wholly left under the Power of the Devil, they are, of Course, *led Captive by him at his Will.* From this hopeless and abandoned State may God keep us all! and grant that by the constant Exercise of a good Life we may preserve our Interest
in

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in him, and ever more rejoice in his holy
Comfort.

To whom, Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and
forever. Amen.

F I N I S.

